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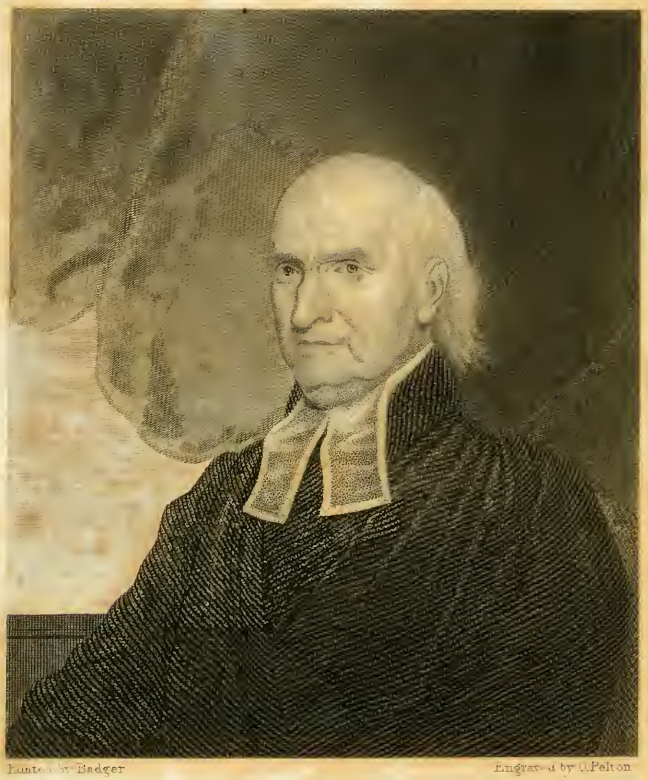

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Nathl Emmons

D. D.

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THE

WORKS

OF

NATHANAEL EMMONS, D. D.

LATE

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN FRANKLIN, MASS.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE.

EDITED BY JACOB IDE, D. D.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

In making selections for the present Work from the writings of the author, it has been thought but a just tribute to his judgment to fix in the first place upon the Volumes, Sermons and Essays which were prepared and published during his life, under his own direction. This has been done, so far as was consistent with what was thought on the whole to be the best arrangement of the subjects, and the number and size of the volumes. It has indeed been suggested by some who have felt deeply interested in this undertaking, that it would be well to omit some of the sermons in which the author's peculiar views are the most strongly expressed, in order to render the work less objectionable to those who differ from him. But such a policy has not appeared to the Editor either just or wise. It is certainly proper that such a man as Dr. Emmons, should be left to speak for himself, and to continue to stand before the public in the same attitude in which he chose to stand while living and able to take his own position. The world wish to see the man as he was, and his writings as he left them. If he is wrong, the full, unequivocal, and even what some consider the unguarded manner in which he has expressed himself, will render it the easier to refute him. On the other hand, if he is right, these discourses are too valuable, the subjects on which they treat too important, to be thrown aside on account of a slight impropriety of expression with which some are disposed to charge him, and which can easily be corrected by those who think the same truth can be told in a better way.

The materials for ten volumes, as valuable as those with which these six are composed, are in the hands of the Editor. The only reason why the present edition embraces no more is, it was the serious judgment of those on whose advice in regard to subjects of this nature the greatest reliance is to be placed, that the present number and size of the volumes constitute a work as large as could with safety be published at this time of pecuniary embarrassment.

The Editor regrets to say that he has not been able to get into the present volumes near all of the matter which he had selected for them;

though they are larger, as well as in better style, than the Prospectus promised they should be. The System might have been made much more complete and valuable, had it not been for the restraint which the prescribed limits imposed. Should the sale of the present edition indicate a call for more of the author's writings, and the times favor their publication, new volumes will be added.

In the selection and arrangement of the discourses composing this Work, the Editor has received valuable suggestions and assistance from many of the author's friends, particularly from Rev. Thomas Williams, Rev. Dr. Spring, Rev. Dr. Burgess, and Rev. Sewall Harding, to whom he tenders his grateful acknowledgments.

The contents of two of these volumes are denominated a *System*, because they contain a number of discourses upon the various subjects usually comprised in a Body of Divinity. It is, however, due to the venerable author to say, that the plan of arranging them in this form, and giving them this name, did not originate with him. It is a device of his friends, which they are aware must in many respects do him great injustice. Had he undertaken to write a System of Divinity, properly so called, he would doubtless have given one to the world altogether more perfect, both in respect to matter and form, than that which is found in the following pages. The discourses which comprise this System were not written with the slightest reference to their present arrangement. Terms are here more frequently defined, similar illustrations more frequently used, and the same inferences more frequently drawn, than they would have been, had the author been aware of the connection in which his writings would be read. But for these things the candid reader will doubtless make a proper allowance. Some advantages will probably result from this apparent evil. The frequent definition of terms will render a mistake in regard to the author's meaning impossible. The practical results of every doctrine clearly drawn out, at the same time the doctrine itself is illustrated, will make a deeper impression, both of the truth and importance of the doctrine. Besides, the single advantage of referring at once to what the author has said at different times upon any particular subject, and reading each part in connection with the whole, is more than sufficient to balance the trifling inconvenience of an occasional repetition of a thought or expression. To the arrangement here made of his discourses, although fully apprised of the evils which have been named as attending it, the author while living gave his cheerful assent.

EDITOR.

PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

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PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL

MEMOIR

OF

NATHANAEL EMMONS, D. D.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF

CHAPTER I.

I was born April 20, 1745, O. S., in the town of East Haddam, county of Hartford, and colony of Connecticut. My father's name was Samuel Emmons, and my mother's maiden name was Ruth Cone. I was the sixth son, and the twelfth and youngest child of my parents. My mother died when I was about twelve years of age. She was a very sincere, humble, heavenly christian. Indeed, both of my parents were professors of religion, and exemplary in the general course of their conduct. They gave me much good instruction in piety and virtue, and restrained me from all outward acts of vice and immorality. I was naturally inclined to learning, and took peculiar pleasure in improving my mind, by reading, and by hearing others converse upon instructive subjects. Having such an inquisitive disposition, and being the youngest child in the family, my parents early entertained thoughts of giving me a public education. But while a schoolboy I manifested such a volatile, trifling spirit, that they altered their purpose of sending me to college, and determined to make me a farmer. This deeply wounded my feelings; for I never loved labor, but my heart was set upon study. I revolved in my mind a great many schemes to attain the object of my wishes. I pur-

chased a Latin Accidence and Grammar with my own property, several years before I was permitted to attend a grammar school. At length, I prevailed upon my father to give me leave to study the languages, if I could find an instructer. I went directly to a Latin master, who engaged to fit me for college by the next Commencement. This was in the year 1762, and as late as the month of November. I applied myself closely to my studies through the winter. In the spring, a fellow student left me to study alone under a very negligent teacher. But notwithstanding all my disadvantages, I made so much proficiency as to enter Yale College the next September. I was now in the nineteenth year of my age, and enjoyed a good degree of health, which enabled me to pursue my studies without interruption, until I took my first degree, in the year 1767. But though I was pretty studious during my residence at college, yet I could by no means equal a number of my class. My father died about three months before I graduated, and left me not the least patrimony, only directing in his will that the expenses of my education should be paid out of his estate. Accordingly, when I left college, I found myself in a state of entire poverty. I had nothing I could call my own, except a very few clothes and a very few books. My parents being both dead, I was totally destitute of any place which I could call my home. My brothers, however, were kind to me, especially my youngest brother, who in a good measure supplied the place and showed the kindness of a father. I was never given to idleness, but always disposed to improve my time in some employment. My natural inclination, in this case, coïncided with my situation, and I soon engaged to teach an English school. Having continued in this business seven or eight months, I applied to a clergyman, Rev. Mr. Strong, of Coventry, Connecticut, to instruct me in theology. I lived in his family, and taught his children several months. After this, I spent a year with another noted divine; and in October, 1769, I was examined before the South Association in Hartford county, who gave me a license to preach the gospel.

Having given this sketch of my education and of my preparations for the ministry, it may be proper to look back and survey my moral and religious character, during this period of my life.

As my godly parents gave me much pious instruction, my mind was early the subject of religious impressions; which always preserved me from gross vices, and even from many smaller irregularities, to which, like other children and youth, I was naturally exposed. I was never noted for falsehood, profaneness, Sabbath breaking, or a great fondness for vain com-

pany. I sustained, while a child, while preparing for college, and while I resided there, a pretty fair moral character. Nor was this all. When I was quite young, I had many serious thoughts. I remember well that, by reading the life of a pious youth, I was sensibly struck with a conviction of my great guilt, and the awful thought of dying unprepared, which led me for a while to secret devotions. Though I did not continue long in this state of mind, yet I entertained reverential thoughts of religion, and fully resolved to become, some time or other, truly pious. These resolutions were cherished and strengthened, by a strong desire to be a preacher of the gospel. I felt a peculiar respect for ministers, and thought I should be extremely happy if I could be properly qualified to be one myself. When one of my sisters died of the consumption, my fears about myself were again alarmed; and I had some lively apprehensions of the state of the damned, especially of the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. I used to be much terrified with the prospect of the day of judgment; and my fears constrained me to cry to God in secret to save me from the wrath to come. But when my fears abated, I soon fell into the neglect of this duty. Such was the general state of my mind, till I turned my attention more directly towards divinity, and began my theological studies. I now had a rational and serious conviction of the great importance of becoming truly religious. It had always been my settled opinion, that saving grace was a necessary qualification for a church member, and much more for a minister of the gospel. Accordingly, when I began to read divinity, I began a constant practice of daily reading the Bible, and of praying to God in secret. With such resolutions, I entertained a hope that God would very soon grant me his special grace, and give me satisfactory evidence of this qualification for the ministry. Nor did I ever indulge a thought of preaching, unless I had some good reason to believe I was the subject of a saving change; for I viewed a graceless minister as a most inconsistent, criminal, and odious character. All this time, however, I had no sense of the total corruption of my heart, and its perfect opposition to God. But one night there came up a terrible thunder storm, which gave me such an awful sense of God's displeasure, and of my going into a miserable eternity, as I never had before. I durst not close my eyes in sleep during the whole night, but lay crying for mercy with great anxiety and distress. This impression continued day after day, and week after week, and put me upon the serious and diligent use of what I supposed to be the appointed means of grace. In this state of mind I went to Mr. Smalley's, to pursue my theological studies. There I was

favored with his plain and instructive preaching; which increased my concern, and gave me a more sensible conviction of the plague of my own heart, and of my real opposition to the way of salvation revealed in the gospel. My heart rose against the doctrine of divine sovereignty, and I felt greatly embarrassed with respect to the use of means. I read certain books, which convinced me that the best desires and prayers of sinners were altogether selfish, criminal and displeasing to God. I knew not what to do, nor where to go for relief. A deep sense of my total depravity of heart, and of the sovereignty of God in having mercy on whom he will have mercy, destroyed my dependence on men and means, and made me almost despair of ever attaining salvation, or becoming fit for any thing but the damnation of hell. But one afternoon, when my hopes were gone, I had a peculiar discovery of the divine perfections, and of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, which filled my mind with a joy and serenity to which I had ever before been a perfect stranger. This was followed by a peculiar spirit of benevolence to all my fellow men, whether friends or foes. And I was transported with the thought of the unspeakable blessedness of the day when universal benevolence should prevail among all mankind. I felt a peculiar complacence in good men, but thought they were extremely stupid, because they did not appear to be more delighted with the gospel, and more engaged to promote the cause of Christ. I pitied the deplorable condition of ignorant, stupid sinners, and thought I could preach so plainly as to convince every body of the glory and importance of the gospel. These were my views and feelings about eight months before I became a candidate for the ministry. I continued a candidate from October, 1769, to April, 1773, when I was ordained to the pastoral care of the second church in Wrentham,* Massachusetts.

I entered on the ministerial work with a great deal of diffidence in my abilities to perform it, on account of the difficulties which I expected to encounter. Several things concurred to awaken this apprehension. Though I had a large portion of pride, yet it served to produce timidity rather than confidence. I was conscious of many and great defects, which depressed my mind, and rendered me incapable of exercising those talents I possessed, to the best advantage. I was destitute of an easy address, of a strong voice, of a good style, and of a graceful delivery. Despairing of being a popular, I was solicitous only to become an instructive preacher. With this view, I determined to give myself wholly to the ministry, and

* Franklin was set off from Wrentham.

use every proper exertion to acquire a thorough knowledge of divinity in general, and of that scheme of sentiments which I had adopted in particular. My zeal with respect to this object, had been awakened and increased by a series of circumstances prior to my settlement in the ministry. About the time I went to college, I was inclined to adopt Arminian sentiments, and tried with all my might to refute the doctrine of Divine decrees. But early in my collegiate life, I happily met with President Edwards on the Freedom of the Will, which I read with close attention, and with more than common satisfaction. He almost convinced me of the truth of those Calvinistic doctrines which I had opposed. But not being quite satisfied, I applied to my tutor, Mr. Punderson Austin, who gave me more light upon the doctrine of election than any other person had ever done; and before I left college, I was full in the belief of what I supposed to be true Calvinism. Accordingly, when I first turned my attention to the study of divinity, I applied to Mr. Strong, a well known Calvinist, who directed me to read Willard's and Ridgely's Expositions of the Assembly's Catechism, and other authors of the same sentiments. After reading such books as these, I thought myself pretty well acquainted with the Calvinistic theory; but when I came to Mr. Smalley's, I found myself in the situation of Apollos, who needed to be instructed more perfectly. Mr. Smalley was a man of a strong and clear mind, who had thoroughly digested Mr. Edwards' writings, and who was well qualified for an instructer. I lived with him several weeks before I had the least apprehension that he differed in sentiment from those old Calvinistic authors which I had just been reading. But he gradually opened what was then called New Divinity. I was startled, and with all the strength I had, endeavored to object against the new sentiments he advanced; but he always refuted and generally convinced me. At length I became a thorough convert to his scheme of sentiments, and received his instructions with great avidity. But when I came to be examined for preaching I met with peculiar difficulty. Several of the aged ministers were opposed to Mr. Smalley's sentiments, and of course to mine. I had a very long and critical examination upon certain disputed points; and when the question was put, whether I should be approbated to preach, several of the ministers voted against it, and one remonstrated in writing. This remonstrance occasioned a great deal of trouble, not only to me but to the Association. The points remonstrated against were agitated in the Association at several subsequent meetings; but finally it was proposed that a conciliatory creed should be formed upon the articles in question, and signed by the Association, and by myself. This proposal

was adopted, and put an end to the dispute respecting my orthodoxy. Such a bustle, however, could not fail to make me in some measure a speckled bird. This I regretted in the time of it; but have since been disposed to think it has been of real service to me. It has made me examine my religious sentiments with more attention, and inspired me with more zeal to propagate and defend them against all opposition. I early began to pursue my studies in a methodical manner. Upon reading the Life of Dr. Doddridge, I transcribed his resolutions, and determined to follow his mode of improving the mind. Though I could not be very methodical while I continued a candidate, yet as soon as I was settled in the ministry, I began to divide my time, and appropriate particular parts to particular duties and particular studies. This I have found by long experience, to be highly favorable to the acquisition of knowledge.

As I am now going to give an account of my ministerial life, I shall be more particular, and arrange what I have to say under the following heads: —

CHAPTER II.

MANNER OF PREACHING.

I RESOLVED, upon my first entrance upon the pastoral office, to make preaching my principal object. It had appeared to me that many ministers, as soon as they had obtained a parish, began to be more inattentive to their public performances, especially to their preaching; and took less and less pains in preparing their public discourses. Such a practice, I thought, betrayed both want of wisdom and want of faithfulness. To avoid this error, I determined to take time for the preparation of my sermons, and endeavor to preach better from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from year to year. I was convinced by experience as well as observation, that I could not long remain stationary, but must necessarily decline if I did not improve in preaching. I farther reflected that my people would naturally and justly expect me to improve in my public performances, and that with all my exertions it would be difficult to keep up with their expectations. Under these impressions I resolved to

take and appropriate sufficient time to prepare for the Sabbath. Though I did not usually fix upon my subject in the beginning of the week, yet I took care to call up various subjects, from which I might select one for my next discourse. My delaying to fix upon any subject, until Friday or Saturday, was owing to two or three reasons. Sometimes I could not hit upon any subject that suited me, early in the week. Sometimes I found, by contemplating a subject, unexpected difficulties in the way of discussing it to my own satisfaction. And sometimes I did of choice delay fixing upon any subject, until the week was nearly elapsed, because I wished to follow providence, and make my discourses as occasional as possible. I always aimed in my preaching, first to instruct and then to impress the minds of my hearers. And to attain these two points, I observed the following things:

In the first place, I determined to preach upon the most important and essential doctrines of the gospel. Indeed, I contemplated going through a complete system of divinity, and very soon after my ordination, I began to execute my design, and kept up a regular course of sermons, until I had gone about half way through my proposed system. Nor can I assign any better reason for finally dropping the scheme, than my own inattention and instability; for I found many advantages resulting from this practice. It often supplied me with subjects, when no particular occurrence of providence, and no particular circumstance of my people suggested any. Besides, it had a happy tendency to enlighten my people in the great doctrines of Christianity, and increase my own stock of theological knowledge. And I am persuaded, that studying and preaching systematically, is the best way for the preacher and hearer to become thoroughly acquainted with that scheme of sentiments, which runs through the Bible.

In the next place, I endeavored to make my discourses doctrinal and argumentative, rather than superficial and declamatory. For this reason, I seldom preached textually; but chose my subject in the first place, and then chose a text adapted to the subject. This enabled me to make my sermons more simple, homogeneal, and pointed; while at the same time, it served to confine the hearer's attention to one important, leading sentiment. Those who preach textually, are obliged to follow the text in all its branches, which often lead to very different and unconnected subjects. Hence, by that time the preacher has gone through all the branches of his text, his sermon will become so complicated that no hearer can carry away any more of it than a few striking, unconnected expressions. Whereas, by the opposite mode of preaching, the hearer may be master

of the whole discourse, which hangs together like a fleece of wool. And in constructing a sermon, regard ought to be had to the memory, as well as to the understanding and attention of the hearer. A loose, desultory method of preaching may highly entertain an audience; though it will never enlighten their understanding, nor impress their conscience, nor oblige them to retain what they have heard. But when the preacher plans his sermon so as to exhibit one great, leading object, and in the prosecution of his subject, keeps that constantly in view; the hearer feels himself tied to the speaker, and cannot leave him until he has finished his discourse. And after a discourse has gained the constant attention of the hearer he cannot very easily erase from his mind the instruction and impression he has received. It is, therefore, essential to instructive preaching, that a discourse be planned with great uniformity and simplicity. And on this account, it is generally best to choose a text, which fully and clearly contains the doctrine to be illustrated and improved. Accordingly, I have always endeavored to find a subject, before I looked for a text; and in looking for a text, I have aimed to find one, which was directly to my purpose, and naturally expressed or suggested the simple sentiment I meant to explain, confirm, and apply. Nor is this all that is necessary to be regarded in planning a discourse, in order to render it instructive. There must be such divisions and subdivisions, as will give the preacher scope to say all that is pertinent to the subject he is treating; and to say all in the most easy, natural, and forcible manner. I have always found more difficulty in planning a discourse properly, than in putting it together afterwards. And the reason of this is plain. If a discourse be planned to advantage, the proper thoughts will readily occur, and the proper expressions will naturally present themselves. And when the plan, the thoughts, and language of a sermon are altogether natural, it can hardly fail of instructing those who hear and understand it.

But I always aimed to *impress the conscience*, as well as *enlighten the understanding* of my hearers. And to produce this effect, I paid great attention to the improvement or application of my discourses. I remember, before I began to preach, a plain, judicious, serious man gave me the first suggestion, that the *application* of a sermon is the most important part of it. I was struck with the truth of the observation, and resolved to retain and improve the advice. But when I began to write sermons, I found the application to be the most *difficult*, as well as most *important* part of a discourse. But this, however, did not discourage me from endeavoring to attain this excellence in preaching. And in order to attain it, I found it necessary, to

digest my subject well before I formed the plan of the discourse, and in planning it, to have a supreme respect to the application. The last thing in execution, should be the first in intention. The body of a discourse should be adapted to prepare the way for the improvement, in which the speaker is to gain his ultimate end. And it ought to be his ultimate end in every sermon, to make lasting impressions upon the hearts and consciences of his hearers. But this cannot be effected, without applying what has been said, in the body of the discourse, to the peculiar state and character of both saints and sinners. The preacher ought to be acquainted with the peculiar views and feelings of all classes of men, under all circumstances of life; and to construct his discourses so as to be able, in the application, to point them to every hearer's heart. Accordingly, I have made it my object to enter into the feelings of my people, while composing and delivering my sermons.

Besides, I always endeavored to be intelligible to all my hearers of every age and capacity. With this view, I took pains to *explain* the doctrines and duties I inculcated with perspicuity and precision. And in explaining as well as illustrating and applying divine truths, I was careful to clothe my ideas in plain, familiar, decent language. I meant to use such words, and form my sentences in such a manner, that every common person might easily understand, and not easily mistake my meaning. But while I aimed at perspicuity, I meant to avoid a low, vulgar, slovenly mode of expression, and adopt, as far as I could, that pure, neat, middle style, which is intelligible to all, and displeasing to none.

I endeavored, however, to unite prudence with plainness. This required me to exhibit obnoxious sentiments, at a proper time, in a proper connection, and definite terms. There is an order in the first principles of Christianity; and when they are treated in their natural order, one truth serves to explain and confirm another. It is extremely difficult for hearers to understand some doctrines, until they have been taught others from which they flow, and with which they are intimately connected. I proposed gradually to lead my people into the knowledge of the most important, and self denying doctrines of the gospel. And in order to do this to the best advantage, I usually brought in those truths which are the most displeasing to the human heart, by way of inference. In this way, the hearers were constrained to acknowledge the premises before they saw the conclusions, which being clearly drawn, it was too late to deny. This I often found to be the best method to silence and convince gainsayers; and I believe there is hardly any other way, to lead prejudiced persons to the knowledge and acknowledg-

ment of some of the most essential doctrines of the gospel. But since captious hearers will always try to misrepresent those sentiments which they dislike, prudence farther requires the preacher to be careful, to deliver such sentiments in such terms as are incapable of misrepresentation. For instance, in treating on divine agency, it is necessary to use such expressions as cannot be construed to mean, that God commits sin. So in addressing the impenitent and unrenewed, it is necessary to use such expressions as cannot be construed to mean either that they can do duty with an unholy heart, or that an unholy heart excuses them for neglecting duty. Such prudence as this, I ever meant to exercise in preaching the gospel; which ought to be exhibited in the most plain, which is the most prudent manner. In a word, I resolved, and, I believe, I have hitherto kept my resolution, to declare all the counsel of God.

CHAPTER III.

MANNER OF STUDYING.

As soon as I entered into the ministry, I resolved to devote my whole time to the sacred work, without encumbering myself with the cares and concerns of the world. I expected, however, that I should need great firmness and vigilance, to guard me against the solicitations of ease, interest, and seeming necessity, to neglect the proper business of my calling. Upon this consideration, I determined not to begin to do the least manual labor, nor even superintend my secular concerns; but to make my study my home, and my ministerial duties my whole employment. Soon after my ordination, I was invited by one of my parishioners to spend several weeks at his house, upon free cost; but I declined the offer, for fear my acceptance would obstruct my studies; and this refusal, I apprehend, prevented other invitations of the same kind. After I had been settled about a year, I employed some of my friends to purchase me a house and farm. The house needed repair, and I employed certain persons to repair it, and others to superintend the business; so that scarcely a man in the parish had less concern with it than I had. The next year, I entered into a family state, in which a great many worldly affairs invited my attention; but I kept my

resolution, and confined myself wholly to my study, without doing so much as an hour's labor in the garden, or in the field. It was a time of war; when laborers were scarce and dear, and when many ministers supposed that the circumstances of the times justified them in neglecting their studies, for the purpose of laboring to support their families. Though they might have thought this to be *their* duty, yet I could never make myself believe that it was *mine*. Hence I felt constrained to separate myself from all secular concerns, and devote myself wholly to my ministerial work. I knew it would be in vain to propose an end, without devising and adopting proper means to accomplish it. Accordingly, I resolved to divide and appropriate my time to the various branches of knowledge which I meant to pursue, and to furnish myself with a good collection of books. These I spared no pains nor expense to obtain. I examined the libraries of my brethren in the ministry. I searched the old books which I found among my people; I kept my eye upon the catalogues of the book-sellers; and among the great variety of authors which I found upon different subjects, I made it a rule to select the *best* and the *worst;* that is to say, those who had written most ingeniously *in favor* of the truth, and *against* it. I meant to read upon both sides of disputed subjects, and wished to obtain those authors on both sides, who had exhibited the most light. Though I was not able to purchase many books at a time, yet I constantly made additions to my collection, by buying and exchanging authors; so that I rarely failed of procuring any book, which I felt a strong inclination to read. Providence often smiled upon me in this respect. The Reverend Diodate Johnson, the minister of the church to which I at first belonged, gave me, at his death, a donation of forty dollars, which I appropriated to the purchase of books. My own congregation had a pretty parish library, when I was settled among them; and in the year 1786, Dr. Franklin presented them a donation of some of the most celebrated English authors. By these means, I generally had a supply of all those kinds of books which were necessary and useful to a divine; and I never wished for others, because I meant to confine my studies to my own profession, and not waste time in acquiring mere speculative knowledge. But I was sensible that both time and books might be detrimental to the real improvement of the mind, unless they were properly used. And in order to make the best use of these two great advantages, I determined to govern myself in the prosecution of my studies, by particular rules.

1. I made a practice of paying my principal attention to but one subject at a time. This had a happy tendency to engage

all the powers of the mind, and especially to set invention at work; which is a faculty very necessary to investigate truth, and which nothing but necessity, or a firm resolution, will call into exercise. It is much easier to read, to hear, to converse, than to investigate; which requires the whole attention of the mind to be steadily fixed upon one subject. Reading and conversing upon a subject will never make a man master of it, without close and steady thinking, and a fair and full decision. And no man can make a fair and full decision upon any abstract or intricate point, until he has thoroughly examined it on all sides, and fairly balanced the principal arguments for and against it. Hence I perceived the importance of attending to but one subject at a time, and of not leaving that subject before I came to a satisfactory and final decision. A final decision, I say, because I found by experience that the more I thought, or read, or conversed upon any subject, the less I understood it, if, after all, I did not discover sufficient evidence to form a full and final decision. But when I steadily pursued a subject until I had discovered the truth, and formed my decisive judgment, then I felt that I had actually added to my common stock of real knowledge; which gave me new power and inclination to make farther improvements.

2. I accustomed myself to attend to all subjects which appeared to be naturally connected with divinity, and calculated to qualify me for the work of the ministry. That all the arts and sciences bear some relation to each other, was long ago observed by Cicero, and has ever since been found to be true by all who have read and studied upon an extended scale. It is extremely difficult to gain a clear understanding of natural and revealed religion, without a considerable degree of general knowledge. The more I attended to theology, the more I was convinced of the importance of acquainting myself with history, ethics, metaphysics, and civil polity. This led me to read freely upon these subjects, and to form my own opinions upon them. I thought it was an injury and reproach to clergymen, that they so much disregarded general knowledge, and paid their whole attention to divinity, and even to a few points in that noble and extensive science. There is no doubt but that many errors and wild notions in religion, have originated from the ignorance of those who have undertaken to preach the gospel without understanding the connection and harmony of its fundamental doctrines. Such preachers seldom attend to any sentiments but the peculiarities of their own sect; and vainly imagine that all are heretics who do not subscribe to their contracted creed. To avoid this mistake, I resolved to read and study divinity in a liberal manner; and not to adopt the senti-

ments of my own denomination, nor to reject the sentiments of other denominations, without examining them for myself, in the best manner I was able. And I can truly say, nothing has contributed more to establish me in the belief of my own system of religious sentiments, than those authors who have written the most forcibly against them; and nothing has assisted me more in defending and maintaining the pure doctrines of the gospel, than a general acquaintance with the errors and delusions which have prevailed in the Christian world. I have made it my practice, in the whole course of my ministry, to read extensively, and to examine as critically and impartially as I could, all ancient and modern errors and innovations in religion; which I have never seen any reason to regret.

3. Though I read a variety of books, yet I always meant, if I could, to read the proper books at a proper time; that is, when I was investigating the subject upon which they treated. I gained but little advantage from reading any author, without a particular object in view; but when I read any author with reference to a particular object, I then took more notice of what he said, understood it better, and derived much more benefit from his writings. I usually restrained myself from reading for amusement; and put captivating books out of sight, when I had occasion of consulting authors upon any important subject. At times, however, I read some authors for the sake of their beautiful style, their lively descriptions, and moral sentiments. Some few novels possessed these excellences, and gained my attention at leisure hours. But I read deep, well written tragedies, for the sake of real improvement in the art of preaching. They appeared to me the very best books to teach true eloquence. They are designed to make the deepest impression on the human mind, and many of them are excellently calculated to produce this effect. A preacher can scarcely find a better model for constructing a popular, practical, pathetic discourse, than a good tragedy; which all along prepares the mind for the grand catastrophe, without discovering it, till the whole soul is wrought into a proper frame to feel the final impression. I found also much benefit from reading a variety of sermons. I read ancient authors, for the sake of the matter contained in their discourses. They were more sentimental than modern preachers. I found good ideas poorly expressed, in old sermons; and those ideas I felt myself at liberty to borrow, and put into my own words. Besides, the Puritan writers breathed a most pious and devout spirit into all their discourses; which I wished to imbibe, and transfuse into my own sermons. I read modern sermonizers, for the benefit of learning the various methods of constructing sermons, and for the purpose of gain-

ing a neat and perspicuous style. But lest I should become a plagiary, and imitator of any man, I made a point of choosing my subject and my text, and of laying out my method, before I read any author who had treated on the same text. For I found, if I read another man's sermon before I had done this, I was naturally led to follow his track, or take peculiar pains to avoid it. Nor did I ever mean to make any single author my general model of sermonizing; though I wished to unite as much as I could the peculiar excellences of Watts, Doddridge, and Edwards. But it is probable that I did approach nearer to Mr. Edwards' manner, than to that of any other man, except Mr. Smalley, my admired instructer. His great excellence consisted in representing divine truths in a clear light, and in reconciling them with each other. This I endeavored to imitate in the general course of my preaching.

4. Though I was fond of reading, yet I was still more desirous of examining and digesting what I read. I always found a disadvantage from reading more than I could digest. This never failed to unsettle my mind, and give it a bias towards skepticism. And I believe there is scarcely any circumstance, which has a more direct tendency to turn learned men into skeptics, than reading too much and thinking too little. When a large number of different and opposite ideas upon a subject are collected in the mind, without being properly examined and arranged, it requires more than common discernment to discover where truth lies; and many a weak mind has, I doubt not, been plunged in darkness, by too much light. To investigate truth, it is necessary to proceed gradually, and attend to but one point at a time, till the mind has gone clear round the subject, and viewed it in every attitude. The natural process is, first to separate from the subject of inquiry whatever does not belong to it; then to consider what is in favor of the sentiment examined; and lastly, to weigh the arguments against it. Studying is often compared with digging; and in digging stones there is peculiar art. The man who understands the business, will not leave a stone because it will not move by his first exertion. He will continue to try it in different positions, until he has found that in which he can apply all his strength to advantage, and effect his purpose. Steady, patient, persevering thinking, will generally surmount every obstacle in the search of truth. Some subjects, indeed, are too high for human investigation. When a difficult subject is proposed, the first question is, whether it lies within the province of reason to decide. This, in most cases, can be easily and quickly determined, because there is a wide difference between difficulties and mysteries. If the question does not involve a real mys-

tery, there is sufficient encouragement to pursue it. And the more difficult it is, and the more others have neglected to examine it, or have failed of success, the more worthy it is of peculiar attention. Accordingly, I have made it my practice to seek after and examine the more difficult points in divinity. This I have found to be the best way for me to make proficiency in real and useful knowledge. By solving one difficulty, I was enabled to solve another; and every new solution gave me new ability and new resolution, to pursue my studies with greater diligence and perseverance.

5. In the course of my studies, I have endeavored to obtain certainty upon all points which would admit of it. Many points in divinity, as well as in other branches of science, will not admit of demonstration, and must remain problematical, after all human researches; but some may be brought to a fair and full decision. In all cases in which I supposed certainty could be obtained, I made it a practice to pursue a subject until I was completely satisfied I had found the truth. I have spent more time, more attention, and more hard study, upon critical and difficult points, than, perhaps, most theologians have been willing to do; and I have never regretted the time and pains I have spent. For I have found, that the knowledge of the most difficult subjects I ever attended to, has thrown the greatest light upon the whole system of divinity; and more than any thing else, enabled me to discover the connection and harmony which run through the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. And though men may be good christians, and even good preachers, without understanding the mutual connection and consistency of the first principles of Christianity, yet I believe that no man can be a great and thorough divine, without critically examining and understanding what are generally considered the most difficult subjects in divinity.

6. I have made it my practice to improve every good opportunity of conversing upon theological subjects. While I was a candidate, I derived a good deal of benefit from conversing with both old and young ministers. Though I soon gave up the idea of convincing those I happened to differ from in sentiment, yet I seldom failed of getting knowledge, by discoursing freely with both orthodox and heterodox divines. After I was settled, I fell into very happy ministerial connections, which afforded me peculiar advantages for improvement by conversation. Nor did I fail of reaping benefit from conversing with those whom I undertook to teach divinity. I found that after I had read, and thought, and even written upon a subject, I could rarely master it without the aid of conversation. I generally perceived, that in the course of free discussion, some

thoughts would be suggested, which had never occurred to me in reading, or thinking upon the subject. Though only superficial knowledge can be gained by mere conversation, yet this, in connection with reading and thinking, may be of great service in theological researches. But in conversing upon subjects, I never did of choice take that side of a question which was contrary to my present opinion, lest I should insensibly warp my mind, and lead myself into error. Such were the general rules by which I meant to govern myself in the course of my theological studies.

CHAPTER IV.

MANNER OF INSTRUCTING.

I was naturally fond of retirement; and when I entered into a family state, I intended to live as much by myself, as would be consistent with proper attention to my people, and to occasional visitants. It did not once occur to my mind that I should become an instructer in divinity. The first young gentleman that applied for instruction, proposed to tarry but a few weeks, and accordingly left me as soon as he proposed. I had then no expectation of any future application. But pretty soon after this, another young man in the vicinity wished to live with me a little while; and being in a bereaved situation, I consented to receive him into my family, and assist him in his theological studies a few months. Still I had not the remotest thought of becoming an instructer of candidates for the ministry; but it so happened, that numbers successively put themselves under my instruction, and in the term of about fifty years, I have taught between eighty and ninety pupils.

At first, I left my students to take very much their own method of studying, only directing them to read particular authors, conversing with them occasionally, and hearing them read their compositions. But after I durst consider myself as an instructer, I adopted nearly the same mode of instructing that Mr. Smalley had taught me. I drew up a concise system of theological questions, which I put into the hands of my pupils, and directed them to write a longer or shorter dissertation upon each question, in the order it was placed. But previously to

their writing upon any subject, I directed them to read some of the best authors I had, who had written upon each side of the question. This appeared to be necessary, not only to give them a full and extensive view of every subject, but also to guard them against falling into errors afterwards. For while they were reading on the wrong side of any question, I had opportunity to make such remarks upon what they read, or what occurred to them in reading, as might prevent their being led astray by false or sophistical reasoning. Though I supposed it was necessary, yet I knew it was dangerous, to read authors of erroneous sentiments; because the best heads and the best hearts are not always able to detect and refute sophistry, without some assistance. In this view, it appeared proper to put authors on both sides of a question into the hands of my pupils, and to give them a general knowledge of the most false and dangerous schemes of religion, before they left me. I thought the danger was less in this way, than to allow them to go out into the world, without being, in some measure, prepared to meet and refute those who either professed or propagated false and destructive sentiments. In hearing their discourses, I used to remark upon their manner of arranging their thoughts, upon the sentiments they exhibited, and upon the beauties and defects of their language. I cautioned them against a flowery, bombastic style, on the one hand, and on the other, against a too low, vulgar, slovenly manner of expression. I recommended a plain, neat, perspicuous, energetic mode of writing and speaking, which all could understand, which none could dislike, and which some of the best judges would admire. I commonly spent some time every day with my students, either to hear their compositions, or to converse with them upon particular subjects. I often discoursed upon the duties, difficulties, advantages and trials of ministers. I inculcated the importance of being prudent, faithful, and exemplary, in every part of their ministerial duty. I urged them to give themselves wholly to their work, and never encumber themselves with the concerns of the world, or dissipate their minds by mixing with vain and unprofitable company. I endeavored to point out how they should treat their parishioners of various characters and dispositions, and taught them as well as I could, how to become able and faithful ministers.

CHAPTER V.

RELIGIOUS VIEWS AND CONDUCT, UNDER THE VARIOUS DISPENSATIONS OF PROVIDENCE TOWARDS MYSELF, MY FAMILY AND MY PEOPLE.

I HAVE briefly delineated my manner of life, from my childhood to the time of my settlement in the ministry. From that period till I entered into a family state, which was about two years, I lived in much retirement and tranquillity. I met with nothing where I resided, nor among my people, nor from any other quarter, which either disturbed my peace, or interrupted my studies. My principal concern was, to discharge the duties of the pastoral office faithfully. I loved my people ardently, and received continual marks of their kindness, esteem, and affection. My outward prospects were promising, and I anticipated scenes of prosperity and usefulness. I generally maintained nearness to God, and enjoyed almost constant light and peace in my own mind. I had time and opportunity for all the duties of devotion, which I performed with great punctuality, with sensible pleasure, and, I trust, with some sincerity. I felt very much detached both from the cares of life and the transactions of the world. Providence directed me to the choice of an agreeable companion, and I was married, April 6, 1775, to Miss DELIVERANCE FRENCH, of Braintree. She possessed a sprightly mind, a pious heart, and a most amiable natural disposition. We went to house-keeping the next week after marriage, with mutually raised expectations. But alas! we knew not what a day might bring forth. A thick, and dark, and terrible storm was gathering, which involved us and our country in deep distress. In less than a week after we had entered our new and peaceful habitation, Lexington battle took place, which proved to be the commencement of a long and bitter war between Britain and America. This great and alarming event gave a dark and discouraging aspect to all our future circumstances in life. I always dreaded war, being totally destitute of a martial spirit, and viewing it highly detrimental to the interests of learning, religion and morality. But the war which now commenced, was of the most malignant kind. It was really a civil war; which originated in, and was productive of, the basest passions of the human heart. Though Britain and America were two countries, yet the inhabitants were one nation, and had always been subjects of the same sovereign. Hence it was to be expected, the contention be-

tween such brethren would be extremely cruel and bloody; and so it eventually proved. Besides, the Americans were divided among themselves. Their crown officers, and some of their leading and most opulent citizens were on the side of Britain, and obstructed all measures in opposition to the British parliament. This created reproaches, invectives, tumults, and violent proceedings in different colonies, counties, towns, parishes, and even neighborhoods. But being heartily attached to my country, and firmly believing we had justice on our side, I met with very little difficulty on account of my political principles or conduct. I always meant to throw all the weight I had into the scale of liberty; though I verily thought some of its advocates adopted sentiments and pursued measures, which were really hostile to good government. And now I believe that many honest Whigs are fully convinced of the errors of some of their fierce and unprincipled leaders. But though I met with no peculiar difficulty in regard to the grounds of the war, yet I shared largely in its common calamities; because I was not prepared, as many of my fathers in the ministry were, to meet them. I had just purchased a settlement, and involved myself in debt, to the amount of at least two hundred pounds. The two years before the war began, my people punctually paid my salary, and advanced one hundred pounds of my settlement a year before it was due by contract. But from the beginning to the end of the war, my people, like many others, neglected to pay my salary at the usual time, and in the usual manner. Nor was this all; the paper currency very early and rapidly depreciated, which threw me into great embarrassments. For, instead of being able to pay for my farm, I was obliged to run farther into debt, and even to borrow money from time to time, to provide necessaries for my family. In short, for the space of fifteen or sixteen years, I was obliged to pay interest for about two hundred pounds. These were my pecuniary difficulties, which arose principally from the war. But it deeply affected me in other respects; it diverted the attention, and even the affections of the people from me. They were so much embarrassed themselves with the expenses, labors, and fatigues of the war, that they neglected to attend public worship, and became very indifferent to every thing of a religious nature. Those who had been apparently warm friends, became cold and distant in their behavior towards me, and sometimes, indeed, treated me with real disrespect and contempt. These things were severe and unexpected trials. For I always meant to treat my people in a friendly and condescending manner, in all my private and public conduct. And being fully of the opinion, that no minister can be useful to a people, any longer than he

possesses their esteem, confidence, and affection, I determined to take a dismission from my pastoral relation, whenever I should discover such symptoms of unusefulness. This appeared to be the case, at the close of the year 1780, and accordingly I asked a dismission, on Lord's day, January 21, 1781. But my request was not granted, and I continued in tolerable peace, till the year 1784, when I again asked a dismission, on Lord's day, May 20. This request was also denied. In both these instances of asking a dismission, I acted with sincerity, and without any sensible sinister motives. No man, perhaps, felt more reluctance to leaving his people, than I did mine. I had cherished a warm and sincere attachment to them, and viewed them in general as the most intelligent, kind, and ministerial people I was ever acquainted with. And this attachment has never been destroyed, though sometimes weakened, by what I have deemed very unseemly and ungrateful conduct. But after all, I am apt to think, they have generally entertained too high an opinion of my abilities, and too low an opinion of my attachment to them. Here, however, we may have erred on both sides. Our feelings and opinions respecting each other will never be known, till the day arrives that will disclose the secrets of all hearts, and rectify all mistakes; and I am willing to refer all things to Him, who will judge without error and without partiality.

But I should be very ungrateful to God, if, after mentioning so many disagreeable things, I should pass over in silence some very happy circumstances, in the course of my ministry. From the time of my ordination to the year 1785, I seemed to labor in vain, and to spend my strength for nought. Though now and then an individual joined the church, yet there was no general and deep attention to divine things among my people. This was a matter of grief and discouragement. I began to despair of ever seeing any considerable success in my ministerial labors, and was brought to feel my entire dependence upon God for a revival of religion. While my mind was in this state, a serious attention to divine things began to appear in the second parish in Medway, which was contiguous to mine, about the middle of November, 1784. In the space of five or six weeks after this, the same serious attention began to spread in my congregation, which continued and increased till April or May, and did not wholly subside for above a year. It was indeed a glorious and solemn season. On the Sabbath, at lectures, and in conferences, the people in general were deeply affected. And though many had high exercises of mind, and were extremely impressed with lively views of eternal realities, yet no disturbance or irregularities occurred.

Those who entertained hopes of a saving change, never expressed any enthusiastic fervor or zeal, but manifested a sensible, rational, scriptural joy in God, and delight in religious duties. It could not be ascertained how many were really awakened and convinced. There was, however, an uncommon solemnity upon the minds of the people in general, so that there was no opposition made to the work, by scarcely a single person. There were about seventy who professed to entertain a hope of a saving change, though the whole of that number did not join our church. This revival of religion put a new face upon my congregation, and gave me new courage and zeal in my ministerial labors. Some who had been unfriendly became friendly, and many who had been friendly, became more and more attached to me. I believe I stood in a favorable light among all my people; though probably some were more displeased with my preaching, the more they understood and felt it. Not long after this revival, religion gradually declined among us, though the late converts retained as much life and vigor and zeal as could be expected, and generally gave convincing evidence that they had been savingly taught of God. But in February, 1794, God was pleased again to pour out his Spirit in a more than common measure, but not to so great a degree as in the former revival. It first appeared in one family, in which two or three were hopefully converted. But upon preaching a sermon in that family, the attention immediately and considerably spread; so that in the course of a few months, about thirty professed to find comfort, and finally made a public profession of religion. In consequence of these two spiritual harvests, my church was greatly enlarged, and continues to be the most numerous in this vicinity. At this time, January, 1806, there is awful coldness, and indifference, and stupidity prevailing, both in the church and congregation. On the whole, I have abundant reason to bless God, that he has given me to see so many displays of divine grace, and afforded me so much ground to hope, that I have been made the instrument of some saving benefit to the precious souls committed to my charge.

In my domestic concerns I have experienced uncommon favors and uncommon frowns of Providence. For more than two years, I enjoyed great comfort in my dear consort. She was a pattern of piety, prudence, condescension, benevolence, and cheerfulness. I never saw her in a passion. I never received an unkind expression from her lips. Whenever I returned from a journey, or even from a visit in the parish, she never failed to welcome me home by a smile on her countenance. I never knew an instance, in which she appeared designedly to give me a painful feeling. As she never meant to

displease me, so it seemed impossible to be displeased with her. Hence our affections, instead of abating with time, mutually strengthened and increased. Having received a pious education, she early imbibed a peculiar veneration for ministers, whom she loved to see, converse with, and entertain. Notwithstanding she had a slender constitution, and was frequently exercised with bodily infirmities, yet she was neither gloomy nor impatient, but always maintained a calm, serene, cheerful spirit. As I was born on the twentieth of April, 1745, ordained on the twenty-first of April, 1773, and married on the sixth of April, 1775, so our first child was born on the fourteenth of April, 1776. I proposed to name him after my grand-father, father, and one of my brothers; but my wife insisted upon calling him Nathanael, after my own name, to which, with some reluctance, I consented. In the next year, on June 23, 1777, we had another son born, whom we named Diodate Johnson, as a token of respect to the Reverend Diodate Johnson, of East Haddam, to whom I was under peculiar obligations of gratitude. Our happiness was now at the summit. We had two lovely children, and a fair prospect of a flourishing family. But we were preparing for peculiar trials and affliction. My dear wife never enjoyed a moment of health from the birth of her last child to her death. She soon fell into a decline, which terminated in a proper consumption, and put a period to her valuable life, June 22, 1778. This was a great and heavy loss. It is true, indeed, I had long anticipated the sorrowful event; but when the parting moment came, it was distressing above any thing I had either anticipated or endured. It cast a gloom over all things around me, and damped all my earthly prospects. Though her conduct before and in her sickness, gave me strong confidence that she was prepared to exchange this for a better world; yet this very circumstance served to increase the greatness of my loss, and the weight of my sorrow.

I was now in a situation very lonely, but not altogether disconsolate. My much respected mother-in-law, who was a pious and amiable woman, and who had resided with me during her daughter's decline, continued to reside with me, and perform the part of a tender mother to her little grand-children. These, at the same time, engrossed my attention and affections. The fondness I had entertained for their mother, I soon transferred to them, who became my idols, and the source of my greatest earthly comfort. They contributed to divert my mind and assuage my sorrows. They also raised my hopes of future felicity, in forming their minds, and preparing them to be useful in life; as they both appeared to possess a good degree of docility, and an amiable disposition. In this last particular, they manifested

something very singular. Though they were very nearly of an age, yet I never knew them to contend about the smallest trifles. They discovered the tender, kind, condescending disposition of their departed mother, which took a strong hold of my heart. I loved them to excess; and God saw it was not safe for them, nor for me, that they should long continue in my hands. About two months after their parent's decease, I took a journey to Braintree, whither I carried their grand-mother, and where I left her. I returned on Wednesday in the afternoon, when I found my eldest child sick of the dysentery. I was alone, and had nobody in the family but a hired man and maid. The care of the sick child chiefly devolved upon me, though not altogether. But on Friday my youngest child was seized with the same disorder, and would go to none but myself, if he could help it. I was now borne down with incessant attention to my children, and incessant concern for their lives. Their disorder increased every day, and became more and more alarming. On Monday the eldest fell into convulsion fits, and expired in extreme agonies, about one o'clock at night. His painful death deeply wounded my parental feelings; but I still had one gleam of hope left. My youngest child was just alive, and there was a bare possibility of his recovery; but before nine o'clock next morning, he also fell into convulsion fits, and died in the utmost anguish and distress. Thus, in one day, all my family prospects were completely blasted! My cup of sorrow was now filled to the brim, and I had to drink a full draught of the wormwood and the gall. It is impossible to describe what I felt. I stood a few moments, and viewed the remains of my two darlings, who had gone to their mother and to their long home, never to return. But I soon found the scene too distressing, and retired to my chamber, to meditate in silence upon my forlorn condition. I thought there was no sorrow like unto my sorrow. I thought my burden was greater than I could bear. I felt as though I could not submit to such a complicated affliction. My heart rose in all its strength against the government of God, and then suddenly sunk under its distress, which greatly alarmed me. I sprang up, and said to myself, I am going into immediate distraction; I must submit, or I am undone for ever. In a very few minutes my burden was removed, and I felt entirely calm and resigned to the will of God. I soon went down, attended to my family concerns, and gave directions respecting the interment of my children. I never enjoyed greater happiness in the course of my life, than I did all that day and the next. My mind was wholly detached from the world, and altogether employed in pleasing contemplation of God and divine things. I felt as though I could

follow my wife and children into eternity, with peculiar satisfaction. And for some time after my sore bereavements, I used to look towards the burying ground, and wish for the time when I might be laid by the side of my departed wife and dear little ones.

While I was thus under the correcting hand of Providence, I had great opportunity of gaining spiritual instruction. And though I was too stupid, yet I believe I learned some things, which I shall never forget, and for which I shall have reason always to bless God. I learned to moderate my expectations from the world, and especially from the enjoyment of children and earthly friends. I have scarcely ever thought of my present wife and children, without reflecting upon their mortality, and realizing the danger of being bereaved of them. And I have never indulged such high hopes concerning my present family, as I presumptuously indulged with respect to the family I have laid in the dust. I have likewise learned, by past painful experience, to mourn with them who mourn, and to weep with them who weep. I used to think before I was bereaved, that I heartily sympathized with the afflicted, at funerals; but I now know that I never entered into their feelings, and was a stranger to the heart of mourners. I now follow them into their solitary dwellings, and mourn with them after their friends and relatives have left and forgotten them. Their heaviest burden comes upon them while they are sitting alone, and reflecting upon the nature and consequences of their bereavements. This I now know was my case. How many painful hours did I experience in secret! And how many tears did I shed in silence! How dreary did my empty house appear! And how often did its appearance, after I had left it for a time, and returned to it, awaken afresh my past sorrows! The same causes, I am persuaded, have the same effects upon other mourners; and therefore I cannot easily forget them, nor cease to sympathize with them, in their solitary hours. In these, and various other respects, I have found it to have been good for me to bear the yoke in my youth.

In less than two years after my wife and two children died, I married a daughter of the Rev. Chester Williams, of Hadley. Her father died when she was young, and her mother married the Rev. Samuel Hopkins, D. D., the immediate successor of Mr. Williams. She was well educated by her father Hopkins, who treated her with truly paternal tenderness, both while her mother lived and after her decease. She then took the principal care of his numerous family, some of whom were quite young. This gave her an opportunity of becoming well acquainted with domestic concerns, and qualified her to pro-

mote my personal comfort and public usefulness. By this second marriage I have had six promising children, two sons and four daughters. These all lived to adult age, and for nearly thirty-four years, I had but little sickness, and no breach in my family. I had peace in my parish, and some considerable success in my ministry. God favored me with three spiritual harvests, or revivals of religion, which rendered my church about as large and flourishing as any in the vicinity. But my days of prosperity were followed by days of adversity. In the year 1813, I buried my second daughter, *Deliverance*. In the year 1820, I buried my second son, *Erastus*. In 1823, I buried my third daughter, *Sarah*. I have now one son and two daughters living, who have young and growing families. After these sore bereavements, I experienced no peculiar troubles in my family, or among my people. I uniformly carried on the work of the ministry. I statedly preached on the Sabbath, and occasionally in private houses. I visited the sick and attended funerals. I catechised the children and youths once a year, in eight or nine school districts in my extensive parish. I always attended, and generally preached at religious conferences, in times of revivals; and from the year 1795 to the year 1813, I constantly preached a concert lecture once in three months. I constantly and punctually attended all my official duties for fifty-four years. But becoming more and more sensible of the common decays of nature and of the increasing infirmities of old age, I did, in 1827, entirely relinquish, and retire from all my ministerial labors, and opened the way for the settlement of another minister in my parish; and accordingly Mr. Elam Smalley was settled here in July, 1829. Within a few weeks after Mr. Smalley's ordination, I was bereaved of my dear consort, who closed her pious, exemplary life in peace to herself and all her surviving friends. I now enjoy, as I have generally enjoyed, a good state of health, and have good reason to say, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me." I know the time of my departure is at hand; and I think I can say with some sincerity, I have fought a good fight, I have nearly finished my course, *I have kept the faith*, and cherish a comfortable hope, that I shall finally receive that crown of righteousness, which awaits all the faithful ministers and followers of Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

MY PUBLICATIONS.

When I entered into the ministry, I resolved to discharge all the pastoral services, which are usually and justly expected of a minister, and to pursue such studies as I deemed the most intimately connected with my professional usefulness. Accordingly I began to read pretty freely and to think pretty closely upon some of the most important theological subjects, that had been long and warmly agitated among different denominations of christians. I imagined, that people were generally becoming more fond of *superficial*, than of *doctrinal* preaching, and were imperceptibly falling into a state of gross ignorance of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. Viewing our churches and religious societies in this dangerous situation, I thought I ought to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. This led me to preach doctrinally to my people for a number of years, before I durst venture to publish any thing that I had written or preached. But after having committed several essays and single discourses to the press, I published numerous sermons on various subjects, time after time, in separate volumes. My principal aim in these publications was, to explain the meaning, to demonstrate the truth, and to illustrate the consistency of the primary doctrines and duties of Christianity, and thereby distinguish true religion from false. I had no intention of starting any new scheme of divinity; for I was early and warmly attached to genuine Calvinism, which I believed to be built upon the firm foundation of the gospel itself. This system, I have thought and still think, is the very form of sound words, which the apostles and their successors taught, long before Calvin was born; and which has been constantly maintained by those who have been justly called *Orthodox*, in distinction from *Heterodox* christians, ever since the first propagation of the Christian religion. But Calvinism has lost much of its purity and simplicity by going through so many unskilful hands of its friends. This has given great advantages to its enemies, who have clearly discovered and successfully attacked some of its excrescences and protuberances. The Calvinists and Arminians are more directly and diametrically opposed to each other, than any other denominations of christians; and after many skirmishes together, they had long ago one great pitched battle, in which they concentrated their mutual attacks to a few

cardinal points. These Dr. *Price* enumerates and reprobates in the following order and strongest terms.

"First, The doctrine of absolute predestination and election.

"Secondly, The doctrine of original sin.

"Thirdly, The doctrine of the total impotence of man, and irresistible grace, in opposition to free will.

"Fourthly, The doctrine of particular, in opposition to universal redemption.

"Fifthly, The doctrine of the perseverance of saints, after being once called and converted.

"These five doctrines have been called, by way of distinction and eminence, the Five Points. They are the points about which the sect called Arminians, differ from Calvinists. But there is one other point connected with those now specified, which forms an essential part of this system, and which, in justice to it, ought to be mentioned. That is, the doctrine of justification by faith alone and the imputed righteousness of Christ. All the orthodox confessions of faith agree in declaring that we are accounted righteous before God, not for our good works, but only for the merit of Christ. In truth, were any man (supposed unacquainted with the controversies which have arisen among christians) to set himself to invent a system of faith so irrational and unscriptural as to be incapable of being received by christians, he could scarcely think of one concerning which he would be more ready to form such a judgment."

It is not a little strange, that Dr. Price should venture to speak so reproachfully of Calvinism, when he knew that some of the greatest divines and metaphysicians in Europe had employed their profound learning and reasoning powers to maintain it; while others of equal learning and genius had labored in vain to overthrow it. The truth is, Calvinists have so ably and perseveringly supported their system of sentiments, that they have been, and still are, universally called the orthodox, in distinction from all other denominations of christians. This can be accounted for, only on the supposition that their scheme of doctrines stands upon a firm and immutable foundation. I know that some Calvinists maintain that the first sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity; that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers for their justification; that sinners are under natural inability to turn from sin to holiness; and that Christ made atonement for the elect only. I grant, these are gross absurdities, or mere wens and protuberances, which must be pared off from true Calvinism, in order to make it appear consistent with both reason and scripture. Accordingly, modern Calvinists readily surrender their formerly untenable outposts, and now find it more easy to defend their citadel against all

attacks of their most numerous adversaries. They are, indeed, attacked by all sectarians and errorists; who complain of them for tenaciously maintaining an unsociable religion, just as Jews and Gentiles complained of the primitive christians for maintaining the pure doctrines of the gospel, which were equally hostile to every false religion in the world. Those, therefore, who now understandingly embrace genuine Calvinism, which is a system composed of the essential and fundamental principles of pure Christianity, cannot consistently amalgamate with Arminians, Methodists, Antinomians, Sabellians, Arians, Socinians, or any species of Universalists and Enthusiasts. This is my settled opinion; and therefore I am surprised that so many, who call themselves orthodox, appear so fond of a coalition with other denominations of christians, who profess to hold systems of theology which are really opposite to, and subversive of genuine Calvinism. I have been a constant and an attentive observer of the late revolutions in the religious opinions of the clergy, the churches, and the people in New England and the United States. I have also been considerably acquainted with the various societies, which have been formed for the promotion of very important and laudable purposes. Some of these societies and some of their measures I highly approve and wish to promote. But I do not approve of any of them as national societies, and claiming a national authority to take the education of children out of the hands of parents; or assuming a national authority to superintend our academies, our colleges, our theological institutions, or our churches and their pastors. And if they persist in their claims, and succeed in their measures, I see nothing to prevent their establishing a national religion, and exercising an ecclesiastical dominion as arbitrary and dangerous as any that now exists in the Christian world. I believe it is my duty and the duty of all Calvinists and Congregationalists, to use all proper means and exertions to oppose and restrain every species of error and religious domination, which threatens to destroy our religious rights and liberties. The question now is, What can we do and what ought we to do, in order to obstruct and check the growth and spread of heresy and arbitrary power, among our churches and aspiring ecclesiastics? It appears from all ecclesiastical history, that orthodoxy has been maintained, and heterodoxy suppressed, not by uniting with the heterodox, but by fairly and boldly attacking them with the powerful weapons of scripture and reason. And these are the only proper weapons to be used by the orthodox against the heterodox at the present day. I know, that the heterodox have greatly the advantage of the orthodox, in respect to numbers, union, and national popularity. But

great is the power of truth over error, and it will ultimately prevail. It certainly becomes all Calvinists and Congregationalists to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto them, by the first ministers and churches in New England. Harvard College, Yale College, Dartmouth College, and all Theological Institutions in Massachusetts and Connecticut, were founded by Calvinists and Congregationalists; and it is to be hoped, that some seeds of orthodoxy are still retained and cultivated in these early seats of learning and religion. The orthodox, therefore, have some ground to expect, that if they put on the whole armor of God, and magnanimously fight the good fight of faith, they may yet revive and support the sinking cause of orthodoxy and Christian liberty, in this day of declension, in this once well instructed and well governed nation.

ADDITIONAL MEMOIR.

BY THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS. — HIS DISCRIMINATION. — INDEPENDENCE. — FEARLESS AVOWAL OF HIS OPINIONS, &C.

It is a just cause of gratitude to Heaven that Dr. Emmons was induced to write his own biography. So far was he advanced in years beyond the present generation, that few of those who survive him could have made themselves acquainted with the facts which he has recorded, had he not himself preserved them. A minute history of his life cannot now be given. But something more ought to be said of him than he has said, or could with propriety say of himself. His childhood and youth were marked with great openness and sincerity of character. Then, as in future life, he manifested the most decided aversion to all equivocation and duplicity. He modestly asserts that he could never, as a student, equal some of his class at college. But it is well known that he stood very high in their estimation. In the sermon preached at his funeral, Rev. Mr. Williams says: "Though Emmons before his admission into college had not the advantages which are commonly afforded to young men who receive a public education, yet in the judgment of his class, he was accounted worthy of the most honorable appointment which they had the privilege to bestow; as they assigned him the Cliosophic oration on the conclusion of their examination for the Baccalaureate. Such an honor, it will be believed, is rarely bestowed upon the most favored sons of science when it is considered, that Joseph Lyman, Samuel Wales, John

Treadwell, and John Trumbull, were members of his class. These very eminent gentlemen retained a constant and increasing esteem and affection for Dr. Emmons, until the conclusion of their earthly existence."

Many of the materials with which the memoirs of others are frequently made up are wanting in the case of Dr. Emmons. Some of the most popular memoirs of the past and present age consist principally in the diaries and letters of their subjects. But Dr. Emmons left no diary. If he ever kept one, he destroyed it. His correspondence was not extensive, for a man of his distinction, and but a small part of this is now to be found. He used to say, that he had rather write a sermon than a letter. Though he lived in a very interesting age of the world, and was conversant with the most important events which took place during almost a century; yet his life was in some respects one of an even tenor, and in proportion to its length, attended with fewer striking incidents than that of many others. The vicissitudes which are produced in the lives of some men by the remarkable changes of their location, furnish the matter for a greater proportion of all that is interesting in their history. But Dr. Emmons' professional life was all spent in one place. There is no record of calls from other and more important places; of great anxiety and doubt on his part respecting the duty of leaving or continuing with his people when called away; or of the deep disappointment of one people, and high gratification of another, in view of his decision to stay at or go from his place.

A man's connection with a college, a theological seminary, or a large city, has often much to do in forming and exhibiting his character. It presents before him peculiar motives to exertion, furnishes increased facilities for improvement, gives him notoriety in the world, and affords numerous interesting incidents to record in the history of his life. But Dr. Emmons' name is associated with none of these things. Nor was his character formed under the stimulating influence which they are suited to exert upon the human mind. The sphere of his labors was a retired country town, which, although highly respectable for the intellectual attainments and moral worth of its inhabitants, had nothing in it peculiarly stimulating to efforts of genius, or suited to bring the character of a scholar or a divine extensively into notice. The distinction to which he rose was acquired in circumstances in which most men would have lived in comparative obscurity.

In contemplating the character of such a man as Dr. Emmons, it seems desirable to direct the attention as much as possible to its leading features. It is natural for those who are

desirous of being more fully acquainted with him to ask such questions as the following: What were the peculiar properties of his mind? or by what was he distinguished from ordinary men of his profession? What did he teach that was not known before? What were the instrumentalities by which his character was formed? And what are some of the results of his long and laborious life? A full answer to these inquiries the writer acknowledges himself unable to give. He has long been acquainted with this venerable divine; has often contemplated his character not only with admiration, but with an ardent desire to understand it. But he is deeply sensible that his knowledge of the man is not adequate to a full exhibition of him to the public. And what he deems a still greater unhappiness, he knows that in his present circumstances, feeble in health, pressed with parochial care, and distracted with the anxiety and labor of getting a heavy work through the press at a most unfavorable time, he cannot transfer to the mind of the public the knowledge of the man which he actually possesses. Not knowing that the labor of preparing this Memoir would devolve upon him, he has neglected to collect the materials which are necessary to make it what it ought to be. And the time allotted him for its completion will not allow of the effort to obtain them which he would be glad to make. But he will submit to the necessity of the case, and cheerfully present to the world such a description of his venerable friend as God shall enable him to write.

That Dr. Emmons was a truly great as well as good man, is a fact universally acknowledged by those who knew him. No one could hear him preach a single sermon, or read a paragraph of his writings, or spend an hour in conversation with him, without being convinced of the superior order of his mind. But it will not be pretended by his warmest admirers that he excelled in every thing. He was not distinguished for his imagination. Though he had the power of elucidating truth to an uncommon degree, and could use comparisons and other figures to great advantage for this purpose; yet he could not, as some men do, amuse and astonish his hearers by the loftiness of his flights or the boldness of his images. He seldom attempted to write poetry, and he did not himself believe that he could succeed in such an exercise.

He could not, as some men seem to do, grasp every thing at a time, or pass without embarrassment from one subject to another, without perceiving any connection between them. It was hard for him to remember names, dates, places, and isolated facts. His mind seemed to seek the natural and more important relations by which one subject is connected with another,

and to pass reluctantly from one to the other, through any other medium.

Though he was accustomed to preach much without writing, and was peculiarly interesting in what were called his extempore discourses, yet he could not declaim with fluency, in a disconnected and desultory manner.

The distinguishing quality of his mind was discrimination. No man was ever able to see, with greater clearness, the relation which one truth bears to another. He did not lay up so many facts as some other men. But it is believed that no man was ever known, who was able to see more clearly the relation of one truth to another, or who has actually traced out more important connections between the various facts in his possession, than he. He read a great deal, but he studied more. Few men in his profession ever read more books. It was astonishing to see with what eagerness he would seize a new publication, and, if a work of importance, with what avidity he would devour its contents. But in the acquisition of new materials to the stock of his knowledge, the relation which these bore to other facts in his possession, was always a primary object of his inquiry. There are men who have read more books than Dr. Emmons; but there have been few, if any, who have read so many with deep attention, and with so thorough an examination of the subjects of which they treated. In early life he became established in the great principles of the gospel, gave these the first place in his attention and his heart, and then considered every thing which he saw, or heard, or read, in relation to them. He not only admitted, as every good man is disposed to do, that all the doctrines of the gospel are consistent with each other, and that every thing else is consistent with them; but he made it an object, at all times, to *see* this consistency. He was by no means deficient in power to accumulate facts, or in his desire to become acquainted with those which were new. His inquisitiveness, in this respect, was equal to that of other great men. But his desire to perceive the relation which one fact bears to another, and his ability to discover their agreement or disagreement, was peculiar. In this he excelled. And it is believed that, in this peculiarity, it is not extravagant to say that he excelled all other divines of his age. The entire satisfaction with which his mind rested in its ultimate conclusions, the perfect transparency which he was accustomed to give to every subject on which he wrote or spoke, and the amazing influence which he could, with little apparent effort, exert over the minds of others to whom he had access, are proofs of this. If the extent of his knowledge be measured by the number of facts which his mind embraced, it must undoubtedly be considered

as less than many others. But if the number and importance of the relations with which he was familiar, between the most important facts, be the criterion of his attainments, no man excelled him.

He was an independent thinker. He called no man master upon earth; and if there ever was a man free from the trammels of human authority, it was he. He was a firm believer in the plenary inspiration of the scriptures, and in them he placed implicit confidence. To their testimony, rightly interpreted, he felt himself bound to yield, however inscrutable or mysterious might be the facts disclosed. And in his efforts to ascertain what the scriptures teach, he made much use of the researches of other men. No man had greater respect for the talents, learning, and labors of able expositors and divines than he; and perhaps it may be added, no man ever made a better use of them. He not only read but studied their works. And when he had thoroughly possessed himself of their views, he remembered that they were but men, and received their instructions only so far as these appeared to him to be in accordance with the word of God.

All men pretend to think for themselves. No man is willing to own that he adopts a particular opinion merely because this is the belief of other great and good men. But it is an undeniable fact, that comparatively few think much on religious subjects without the aid of others. The great majority go as far as they are led, and no farther. And many of those who mean to think for themselves, and who are not unduly influenced by the authority of great names, do not pursue their independent investigations far enough to form a definite opinion of their own. Their opinions so far as they have any, are made up, insensibly perhaps, in view of the arguments of others, rather than their own arguments; the soundness of which they have admitted without examination. But it was the custom of Dr. Emmons, not only to abstract every subject, as much as possible, from the opinions of others respecting it, and to view it by the light of scripture, reason and common sense; but at the same time to subject the opinions of others respecting it to the same rigid and thorough investigation. He used to tell his students, and others whom he advised respecting their studies, to think independently. "Young ministers," he would sometimes say, "feel themselves weak or lame, and they think they must use crutches. But if they would ever do any thing in the world, they must learn to walk alone." He would sometimes add, "I once used crutches; but I have thrown them away. I can remember the very day when I threw away my crutches." Dr. Beecher once said to a southern clergyman, "Dr. Em-

mons has done more independent thinking than all the ministers in the United States south of the Potomac."

He was not hasty in the formation of his opinions. He never allowed himself to draw a conclusion without thoroughly examining the premises. If he happened to be asked, what was truth respecting any subject which he had not fully considered, his answer was, "I don't know." But he firmly believed that the truth on every subject, which the gospel reveals, may be known. He entered upon the examination of such subjects with the expectation of finding the truth. And when his examination was closed, he generally felt a cheerful confidence, that he had discovered the truth. It is well known that he did encounter many a hard subject which other great men choose to avoid. He formed a clear and definite opinion on many subjects about which others, if they think at all, form no opinion. In regard to the doctrines of the gospel, respecting which there is, and always has been, the most wavering, hesitation, doubt, and indecision, in the religious world, his mind seemed to be entirely at rest. While most christians, and not a few ministers of the gospel, shun an investigation of difficult points in theology, and endeavor to excuse themselves from this arduous undertaking, under the pretence that such speculation is unprofitable and vain, he entered upon it under a deep sense of its duty and importance. He believed that difficult subjects in theology are often important subjects; and that to remove a difficulty, is a great attainment in the science. In nothing perhaps is his independence of thought more manifest, than in his esteeming that attainable which others considered unattainable; and that important, on which others placed no value. With the fact before him, that multitudes fail entirely in their attempts to elucidate the doctrines of the gospel, and rather darken counsel by words without knowledge, than shed any important light upon the world, he believed that the truth could not only be known, but made manifest to all men; and steadily addressed himself to the accomplishment of this great undertaking.

It is a remarkable fact, that he was the follower of no one. There are those who imitate him; who not only adopt his creed, but imitate his style and manner so nearly, that every discourse which they deliver bears witness to their acquaintance with his writings, and the influence which he exerts over their minds. But the man cannot be named, whom he followed, either in doctrine, or style, or manner. He was *himself*, in every respect, and no body else. He called himself "a thorough Calvinist," and he received and maintained the leading principles of this great Reformer. But he differed from him in many important respects, and often attempted to show the fal-

lacy of his reasoning. Upon the extent of the atonement, the ability of the sinner, and the nature of the connection between Adam and his posterity, and on some other points, there is a great difference in their statements. He was a great admirer of President Edwards. He thought highly of his talents and piety, and read his works with great pleasure and profit. But although he agreed with him in the fundamental principles of his scheme, he could not accede to his views of the negative nature of sin, the transmission of a sinful nature from Adam, or of the merits of Christ's obedience. He cherished a very high opinion of Dr. Hopkins. He was willing to be called a Hopkinsian, and often gave himself this appellation. But it is well known, that he did not believe all that this great and good man has published to the world. Hopkins taught that men are passive in regeneration; Emmons, that they are active. This made an important difference in their views on many other subjects. He has often been heard to say, that the Assembly's Catechism was the best formula of Christian doctrine which he had ever seen. He taught it to his children as long as they were under his care, and for fifty years to the children of his parish. But there are many things in this which he considered erroneous, and which he occasionally exposed in his public discourses. He did not believe that all mankind, strictly speaking, sinned in Adam and fell with him in his first transgression; or that the obedience of Christ is imputed to believers. He held Dr. Smalley in the highest estimation, as a divine, and always spoke of him with gratitude, as the means under Providence of giving him a clearer vision of the truth. But he never followed him implicitly. He differed from him on some points while under his instruction. And at a subsequent period, he publicly controverted his views on unregenerate doings. Though he may be said to agree with all of the forementioned divines in the great principles of their theology, yet he differed from them all, or about as much as they differed from each other. And in those respects in which he agrees with them, he often comes to his conclusion by a process entirely different from that by which they are led to theirs.

His manner of writing, as well as his opinions, are truly his own. His sermons bear some resemblance to those of Tillotson and Watts; but their resemblance to neither of them is so exact, as to indicate the slightest effort at imitation. There is some resemblance between his style and that of Dr. Smalley; but no one would mistake the one for the other, or suspect that there was any designed likeness between them. He investigated the same subjects on which other great men have written, in a manner as truly his own, as though he was unacquainted

with their writings. He examined their reasoning on all these subjects, with the same independence of thought, as that with which he examined the subjects themselves. And the style and manner in which he has communicated his thoughts on all these subjects, are so perfectly his own, as to be known to be his, to all who are familiar with his writings, without any other information than what is derived from the simple perusal. Let an intelligent man, well acquainted with his style of writing, read any of the periodicals in which he was accustomed to write, and he will, generally speaking, be able to select his communications from those of every other writer.

Should it be asked by what influence this independence of character was formed, the first and most important answer must be, by the same power by which all his faculties were created. It is in a great degree an original trait of character; a natural consequence of that power of discrimination which God gave him. A clear perception of the truth naturally inspires the mind with a rational confidence in its own powers.

His early connection with Dr. Smalley was doubtless one means of strengthening and developing this trait of his character. "Dr. Smalley," says the Rev. John Marsh in his Ecclesiastical History, "was a man of astonishing logical powers, who contributed more than any one of his age to the progress of theological science." This great man was himself an independent thinker. His views of theology were, in many respects, in advance of those of his contemporaries. The new light which he shed upon many subjects, and the independent manner in which he thought and acted, were suited to exert a powerful influence upon such a mind as that of Emmons. The clear views of truth which he now received, naturally tended to increase his native power of discrimination, and to give him new confidence in his own conclusions; while the admirable example of independence constantly before him, could not but encourage the indulgence of his native propensity to think and act for himself.

Another thing which probably tended to the same result, in a still greater degree, was the opposition made to his approbation as a preacher of the gospel, by some members of the Association by whom he was examined. The Rev. Edward Eels, of Upper Middletown, strenuously opposed his approbation; and when he saw his efforts were unavailing, he threw in his written protest against it. As the document is somewhat of a curiosity, and serves to show what religious opinions prevailed in Connecticut in those days, it is here inserted for the perusal of the reader.

COPY.

At a meeting of the South Association in Hartford County, convened at the house of the Rev. Mr. John Smalley in New Britain, Oct. 3, A. D. 1769, —

The Rev. Mr. Smalley presented Mr. Nathanael Emmons to be examined for preaching, and after his examination, he received a license from that Revd. Body, against which I found myself obliged, in faithfulness to God and his church, and in obedience to my own conscience, to enter my protest for the following reasons, which I minute down this 5th day of October, 1769.

Mr. Emmons was asked, how God created man. He answered, After the image of God. He was asked wherein that image of God consisted. He answered, In a right temper of heart. He was asked whether he designed to distinguish the heart or will from the understanding. He answered, Yes. He was asked whether the Divine image was upon Adam's understanding as well as his will. He answered, No. And while this important doctrine of the Divine image on man was illustrated as it respected the whole man, understanding and will, the Rev. Mr. Smalley said, the Divine image was no more upon Adam's understanding than upon his fingers and toes.

Under the head of Adam's apostacy, Mr. Emmons said that the whole nature of Adam was depraved. He was asked what Adam lost by his apostacy. He said, A good temper of heart. It was asked, whether he meant by that the image of God. He said, Yes. He was asked whether the apostacy affected his understanding. He said, No. He was asked whether the understanding of Adam after his fall was as good, and equal to what it was in a state of innocency. He said, Yes. Then, by the help of a friend, he was brought to grant that he was not so teachable and apt to learn, under the influence of a bad heart as a good one. It was observed, that to own a universal depravity by the apostacy of Adam, and, that the understanding is not affected by the apostacy, is a contradiction; — which was attempted to be reconciled by another hand. Upon which it was observed, it was not a proper time to dispute matters among ourselves.

Speaking of the great doctrine of regeneration, it was said that regeneration consisted in a new principle implanted in the soul, in which the soul is passive. It was sometimes called a new temper of heart. He was asked whether regeneration affected the understanding as well as the will. He said, No; the heart or will was only renewed by the Spirit of God. It was observed that whatsoever belonged to the rational soul, not regenerated, could not be prepared for the kingdom of God. Many things were said on this subject, besides what was said by the candidate.

Upon the subject of the soul's being passive in regeneration, and yet must attend to means antecedent to regeneration to obtain speculative knowledge, he said that by the use of means the conscience may be convinced that the law is just and good, and that he may have his conscience convinced of sin by the law and his exposedness to the

Divine wrath; but while his conscience is convinced of these things, his heart rises up against them; and the enmity of his heart against God and his law rises in proportion to his conscience' being convinced of these things; and when he is brought to the last stage of preparatory work before regeneration, his enmity rises to the highest degree. He farther added, that God did not command or require the unregenerate to use any means but with a renewed heart, a gracious principle, or love to God. This occasioned much conversation with others, as well as with the candidate. But it issued in this. That there was no command of God to pray or do any other duty but with a perfect heart. God commands the sinner to repent, and he is to use means to convince him of sin with a gracious principle, and so in every other duty.

Speaking of the seals of the covenant, especially of Baptism when applied to adult persons, his words in his confession of faith are as follows, &c. — upon which much was said. The sum of which is this, That he must give a credible evidence of inward renewing grace, and be satisfied himself, or have a prevailing hope of his good estate, or his baptism is to be deferred: — and the same qualifications are to be looked for in admitting persons into full communion. Farther, he professed that only the infants of those who are in complete standing in the church, by which he meant those in full communion, are to be baptized.

When the examination was ended, each one was asked whether he could license the candidate. It was said, Yes, by almost all. And when I objected, and suggested my reasons, they appeared to have no weight with my brethren. Then I urged that they would defer the license for farther consideration, for I had never known, for thirty years, of but one instance of any being licensed without the approbation of every member present, and that proved a great uneasiness amongst us. I farther urged that it might be deferred for this reason: In licensing candidates, we act for the churches, and they depend upon our licensing them upon the known faith of the churches; and it is apparent upon examination, Mr. Emmons is not of the same faith, in some of the important doctrines of religion, we settled with our churches upon; and therefore we ought to consult our churches before we licensed candidates upon a different faith. But nothing I could say by way of argument and persuasion, availed any thing.

I was told, if I did not like the proceedings of the Association, I might enter my protest, with the reasons. Which was one reason of my writing as above, the first opportunity. This was signed,

EDWARD EELS.

Middletown, Oct. 6, 1769.

This document produced a great excitement among the ministers in the vicinity of its origin, and by rendering Emmons, to use his own language, "a speckled bird," gave him, for a time, no little trouble. The excitement was finally allayed by a conciliatory creed which was drawn up for the purpose, and

signed by him and the Association. But its effect upon his mind was lasting as his life. It led him to reëxamine the subjects of difference between him and his opponents; disclosed to him the fact that the clergy of his own State, whom he highly venerated, differed widely among themselves; and taught him the importance, not only of being fully persuaded in his own mind, but of being able to defend himself against the attacks of men in high places. After this, he naturally felt that he must stand or fall upon his own merits; that it was unwise, as well as wicked, to place implicit reliance upon the faith of others; that there was room for improvement in theological science, and a loud call in the providence of God for a more full and consistent exhibition of the truth. It is impossible to predict what would be the effect of considerations like these upon such a mind as that of Emmons. But there is little reason to doubt that they did exert a most important influence, in forming and developing one of the most interesting and prominent traits of his character.

The fearless and honest manner in which Dr. Emmons expressed the convictions of his own mind, constitutes a prominent feature in his character. He was as independent in the avowal of his opinions, as in the formation of them. He was careful never to throw out mere impressions, conjectures, or half formed opinions. But when his mind was fully made up on any doctrine or duty, he was never afraid to avow it. He was always confident that truth would bear its own weight. He felt the importance, as every wise man does, of exhibiting particular truths at a proper time, and applying them to proper subjects; or, in other words, of "rightly dividing the word of truth." Few ministers ever studied more to preach appropriately and timely than he. But he had nothing to conceal. He disdained to withhold a truth because it was unpopular. He did not fear the consequences of truth, exhibited in a scriptural attitude, and at a proper time, either to himself, to his hearers, or the cause of God. While he seems to have had a remarkably clear and comprehensive view of the great doctrines of the gospel, he appears also to have had an unusual confidence in the power of truth, as the instrument of the Holy Ghost, to accomplish its great designs. No man knew better than he the native opposition of the human heart to God, or the strength of this opposition when highly excited. And he was careful not unnecessarily to call it into action. But he never attempted to prevent its exercise by the *concealment of the truth*, or to allay its asperity by withdrawing from it the sword of the Spirit. There are many ministers, whose convictions are decidedly in favor of the most offensive doctrines that he ever taught, who

do not avow them as he did. In private conversation they admit the truth of God's decrees both of election and reprobation, and of his agency in the production of sin as well as holiness; but seldom or never name them in their public discourses. For some reason or other, they seem to shrink from the open and public avowal of their real conviction in regard to these things. But Dr. Emmons never adopted this policy. On all these and other unpopular subjects, his people knew his opinions, and the arguments by which they were sustained. He loved his people, and sought to please them; but he never would attempt to promote their pleasure by the concealment, or denial, or palliation of any unpleasant truth. He respected his people, and wished himself to secure their respect; but any favor or respect from them, which must be obtained by the least concealment of his honest convictions of truth and duty, he deemed too dear a purchase for him to make. He knew as well as any man that one way to benefit his people was to gain their good will and esteem. But he never hoped to do them good by any influence with them which a concealment of the truth would give him. There were times when the honest avowal of his opinions did excite the opposition of some of his people, and his faithful rebukes the resentment of others. This opposition and resentment he bore with submission and patience, considering them among the evils which he was called to suffer in the discharge of duty; and viewing them as far less, both in their effects upon him and them, than those which would ultimately result from an opposite course.

Every practice, as well as doctrine, which he thought to be in opposition to the word of God, he would fearlessly censure. It made no difference whether the practice was fashionable or unfashionable; whether its abettors were few or many; whether rich or poor; honorable or despised; friends or foes. No individual among his people could ever refer to him as favoring or conniving at, or as being indifferent to any vain amusement, or evil custom which prevailed among them. On the other hand, the friends of good order and sound morals, and all the friends of truth, could point with confidence not only to his example, but to his expressed opinion, and oftentimes to his unforgotten arguments, as authority against the practices which they wished to discourage.

He was not afraid to avow his dissent from the practices of the ministers and churches of his own order, whenever they appeared to him either unscriptural or unwise. If the majority of the ministers and churches were against him, and even if he were obliged to stand entirely alone, he ceased not to speak his opinion boldly, and to act in accordance with it. In regard

to the propriety of forming a General Association in this Commonwealth, he did dissent from the great body of his brethren in the ministry, and from many of his most highly esteemed and valuable friends; and while he cheerfully conceded to them the right of acting for themselves in regard to this great question, and uniformly treated them with the same cordiality as though no difference of opinion existed between them, he continued to avow his opinion on this subject as long as he lived, and to act in consistency with it. His principal objection to the General Association was, that it was liable to the accumulation of a power which would be dangerous to the independence of the churches. He was afraid of any very large ministerial or ecclesiastical body. He thought them unnecessary and of dangerous tendency, on account of the power which they would be able to exert over individuals, and churches. It was in his estimation a matter of great importance that individual ministers and churches should be able to think and act for themselves, unawed and uninfluenced by the decision of great and powerful bodies.

When Free Masonry was in all its glory, professors of religion entering its lodges, ministers of the gospel sanctioning its claims, and the multitude every where captivated with its gaudy appearance and pompous titles; he openly denounced the institution as dangerous to the country, as unfriendly to religion, and as an imposition upon the world.

He never liked protracted meetings. And although there was a time when there was scarcely a minister or a church of his own denomination, or any other which favors revivals of religion, that did not in some way or other give them countenance, yet he uniformly and decidedly opposed them. He did not doubt that they might be instrumental of much present good. He listened with interest to the accounts which were given of the numbers suddenly awakened and convicted, and candidly allowed that many by these means might be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. But still he would say, they are an unauthorized measure, a human device, which will in the end do more hurt than good. Among the evils which he feared, was an undue excitement, which would lead ministers to give a distorted view of the gospel, by dwelling upon those points only which are suited to produce the greatest present effects; and the people to mistake the feeling of interest awakened by the peculiar circumstances in which they are placed, for genuine piety. He was afraid also, that these extraordinary meetings would create a disrelish for the common means of grace; and that the performances of ministers invited from a distance for the occasion, being, of course, if not their most

labored discourses, their most popular and interesting ones, would create dissatisfaction among the people with such as their own pastor, in other circumstances, would be able to preach. He used to say that a dreadful reaction would follow these proceedings; that in some cases there would be great stupidity; and in others great restlessness among the churches; that many churches would be divided, many ministers dismissed, many souls deceived by the encouragement of false hopes, and many sinners turned away in disgust from the ministry of the gospel. He conceded that much might be done to prevent these evils, by peculiar wisdom and care on the part of those who had the management of the meetings. But still he contended that they were a measure illy suited to the permanent welfare of the churches; a measure which the great Head of the church did not see fit to appoint, and which no degree of wisdom or effort on the part of men could render generally and permanently useful.

How far he was right or wrong in the views which he entertained in regard to this subject, the public now have a better opportunity to judge than either he or they had at the time when his opinion was expressed. The subject is here introduced merely for the purpose of illustrating the degree of independence with which he formed his opinions, and the fearless manner in which he expressed them.

The same traits of character are brought to view, in a most striking manner, by his opposition to the use of instruments in sacred music. In this respect, he was not indeed entirely alone; but he differed, and he was aware that he differed, not only from the great body of his brethren in the ministry, but from the professed followers of Christ generally throughout the world. But notwithstanding this amazing weight of authority against him, he adhered steadfastly to his own convictions, expressed them on all proper occasions without hesitation or reserve, and always acted in consistency with them. As long as he continued the acting pastor of his church and people, he prevailed with the choir to lay aside all instruments in the sanctuary, and to render unto God the tribute of vocal praise. And to their credit, as well as his, it ought to be recorded, that the want of instruments in their sacred music was never felt nor lamented.

The reader will doubtless inquire, how Dr. Emmons could carry into practice opinions of his own, which differed so widely from those of the religious community in general. The answer is, he always took care to express his convictions on every practical subject, and the reasons for them, in anticipation of the objections of his people. They always had before them

his views, expressed in his clear, logical, and forcible manner; and if these failed to produce satisfaction in their minds, they always made them feel that they had obstacles to overcome in opposing him, which were too formidable for them to encounter. This, it is apprehended, was the great secret of his success. But besides the influence exerted in this way, he was able to do much on all occasions by the weight of his character, and the strong attachment which the people cherished towards him. His people generally desired to gratify him as far as they could, without too much sacrifice of personal feeling or interest. Another thing which tended to prevent difficulty, from the enforcement of his peculiar views on any subject, and to secure him general success, was, he knew just how far to push these things, and when to stop. He never attempted to push any measure beyond the convictions and feelings of his people. After having proposed one, and given his reasons for it, in a plain, faithful, and affectionate manner, he left it with them. He would not tease, reproach, or threaten them, if they declined acting as he proposed; but with the distinct understanding that the responsibility was now theirs, he would submit to the result, and proceed with his work with his accustomed industry and cheerfulness. Though he was peculiarly decided, he was never overbearing, nor obstinate.

CHAPTER II.

CHARACTER OF HIS PIETY. — HIS TEMPERANCE. — DEVOTION TO HIS WORK AND INDUSTRY IN IT.

Dr. Emmons was opposed to ostentation of every kind. Any thing which approaches this in writing or speaking, was an object of his hearty dislike. Though he was an admirer of true greatness in all its forms, and never more delighted than when he witnessed an easy and natural exhibition of talents, for any important purpose; yet he could never endure an affected smartness, or a mere show of eloquence, in a public speaker. He was simple, unaffected in his own style and manner of address, and these were always objects of his approval in others. But his aversion to every thing like affected piety, or mere show in religion, was peculiarly strong. He never spoke on this subject merely for the sake of showing his piety. He never ap-

peared more serious, more heavenly minded, or more interested in the subject of religion, than he really felt. He seldom talked much on the subject of his own feelings; and it was his opinion, that christians stand in the way of their own improvement, by making their own feelings so much the direct object of their conversation, instead of those truths of the gospel which are the proper objects of holy feeling, and the contemplation of which is the most effectual means of producing it. In examining candidates for admission to the church, and in conversation with others with a view to know their spiritual state, especially those who had recently begun to entertain hopes of their conversion, he inquired with great particularity into their feelings; and with singular discrimination pointed out to them, the difference between true and false affections. But in his efforts to raise the tone of feeling in the christian's heart, to promote his growth in grace, and to quicken him in duty, he aimed to lead him to the contemplation of those truths which exhibit the proper objects of holy affection, and the appropriate motives to Christian effort.

Though unostentatious, his piety was deep, uniform and consistent. Like David, he "set the *Lord* always before him." The glorious attributes and perfections of the divine character were the abiding objects of his contemplation. No man ever thought more about God than he. And it is well known that with him mere speculation was not religion. He gave himself, as he gave every one else, credit for genuine piety, no farther than his *heart* was right with God. It was a part of his daily labor to keep himself in the love of God. For this purpose he had his hours of secret meditation and prayer, which he observed with singular exactness and punctuality. It was known to all who resided in his family, and to many others who were occasionally there, that at certain times no one could enter his study, unless there was something special to call them there. He made the word of God his constant companion. He studied this, not merely as his text-book, or the source whence to draw his subjects, and materials for his sermons, but as the means of purifying and quickening his feelings and assisting his devotions. He took pains to shut the world out of his heart. He dreaded its intrusion as he did the most deadly foe; and that it might not exert an undue influence over him, he *guarded* against the pressure of its cares and the fascination of its enjoyments. To him the Sabbath was a delight. Its sacred hours he devoted exclusively to the services of religion, and not only taught but required all his household to do the same. He would keep no one in his employ who openly profaned the Sabbath, or neglected the public worship

of God, or refused a prompt and respectful attendance upon the devotions of the family.

Nor did he neglect the duties which he owed to his fellow creatures. The great principle of disinterested love on which he so much insisted in his public discourses, he in a good degree carried out in his practice. He was remarkably devoted to the spiritual interests of his people. He viewed his consecration to the work of the ministry among them as a very significant and solemn transaction, the weighty import of which he could never forget or disregard. He aimed to give them the avails of his time, his talents, and his learning. In all his dealings with men, he was proverbially just and honorable. He was among the few, who never use any kind of deceit or management with a view to gain an advantage over others, and who are never charged with any thing little or mean. He gave liberally of his substance not only for the spread of the gospel abroad among the destitute, but for the promotion of religion at home. He was a well known friend to the poor, and his hand was always open for the supply of their wants. The distressed of every description within the circle of his acquaintance, would resort to him for sympathy and advice. His house was a favorite resort for that unfortunate class of people, who were occasionally deprived of their reason. The tenderness and compassion with which he was known to treat them, seemed to inspire them with a confidence in him which they reposed in no one else. It is difficult to say which was the more manifest, his faithfulness to God, or his friendship to man.

There was a remarkable uniformity in his religion. He was not conspicuous for some of the Christian graces, while others of equal loveliness and importance found no place in his heart; nor did he allow himself in the neglect of a part of his practical duties, while he was full of zeal in the discharge of others of comparatively less importance. The extent and accuracy of his knowledge of Christian doctrine and duty, prepared the way for a beautiful symmetry in his religious exercises and practice. Though he was, as all christians are, the subject of some vicissitude of feeling, which no doubt occasionally had an influence upon his conduct, yet he was on the whole remarkable for his constancy in religion. It was not his habit to be highly excited one day, and cold and languid the next. He was not active and faithful in the discharge of his duties for a little season, and then for an equal or a longer time, negligent and unfaithful. From week to week, from month to month, and from year to year, he was the same spiritual, devoted and active minister of the Lord Jesus, the same burning and shining light in the church of God.

The strict temperance which marked his character deserves a record. He was ever mindful of the fact, that his body as well as his soul might be presented as an acceptable sacrifice to God; and this he considered "as his reasonable service." "He kept under his body and brought it into subjection; lest that by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away." He took care of the body as the tenement of the soul, and as "the temple of the Holy Ghost." It might in truth be said that he was "temperate in all things." Though he was remarkable for his industry, yet he always took care that his work should be done in season. He did not allow himself to study late at night. He usually retired by ten o'clock, and arose at all seasons of the year, before the sun, and in the winter by day light. He was resolute and fearless. No weather could keep him in, when duty obviously called him abroad; but he always took care not needlessly to expose himself to storms, to evening air, or to excessive cold or heat.

Though he lived at a period when the use of ardent spirits was universally fashionable, yet he was always essentially a total abstinence man. He seldom tasted a drop of any kind of ardent spirit or wine; and whenever he did, it was either in obedience to a custom which had become imperative, or as a medicine for some disease for which it was then thought useful. Old people, especially when they have arrived at their eightieth or ninetieth year, are generally afraid of innovations, and disposed to doubt the utility of modern improvements. But Dr. Emmons at this great age, hailed the temperance reformation as a harbinger of good, and cheerfully gave his name to be enrolled with those who were pledged against the use of ardent spirit as a drink. It gave him great pleasure to see, near the close of his life, the people generally embracing substantially the same views, on this subject, which he had entertained all his days, and zealously engaged in carrying them into practice.

His temperance in respect to the use of food was quite as remarkable as his abstinence from intoxicating drinks. He would eat nothing which he found by experiment was likely to injure him. Though he ordinarily said nothing on the subject, and made his meals of what was set before him, yet he was always careful to choose the most simple food, and to partake of this in a very sparing manner. He once told the writer, that it was his uniform practice, and had been from his youth, to leave off eating with a good appetite. He seldom drank coffee; would take a cup of tea in the morning, and also in the evening, if he were in company with those who used it; but he chose milk for his supper, and when at home, always took it, until a very short time before his death. There is good reason

to believe that his rigid temperance, both in eating and drinking, contributed essentially to the good health which he uniformly enjoyed; to his extraordinary capacity for study; and to the continuance of his life to the great age at which he arrived.

He was early taught to respect the ministry. In his childhood, he viewed it as a peculiarly high and holy calling. He entered upon it very soon after his conversion, while his heart was warm with his first love. He seems then to have made an entire consecration of his time, talents, attainments and influence, to this great work. The strength of his attachment to his calling, and the sincerity of his devotion to it, are manifest from the fact, that no occurrence of his life ever did divert his attention from it. And let not the reader suppose that his temptations to neglect the work of the ministry were not as strong as those by which others are actually drawn aside. Few clergymen of the present generation ever find themselves in circumstances in which it is more difficult to devote themselves exclusively to their work, or which would seem to present a better excuse for devoting much time to their secular concerns, than those in which he was placed in the early days of his ministry. According to the custom which prevailed at that time among country clergymen, and which was doubtless a good one for the time, he purchased him a farm at the commencement of his ministry. The one which was, in the providence of God, thrown into his hands, and which, all things considered, appeared to be the most eligible, was large, and out of order. The buildings were old and dilapidated, and the fences lay in ruins. Before he could settle upon it, the buildings at least must undergo a thorough repair. In these circumstances, most young ministers would have felt themselves justified in attending to these things, at least for a time, until a suitable tenement could be prepared for their future residence. But Emmons, that he might give his attention, as well as his time, wholly to the ministry, not only hired carpenters to do the necessary work upon the buildings, but put the entire oversight of it into other hands. And although he boarded within sight of his own house, and frequently passed it while under repair, he never allowed himself to see its interior, until it was finished. This fact, which was told by himself to several of his friends, a short time before his decease, whether it be considered indicative of wisdom or the want of it, certainly evinces one thing; and that is, a determination of no ordinary character, to keep himself free from the entanglements of the world. There are other facts, indicative of the same thing, equally striking in their character. Amidst the distresses of a long and bloody war; under the pressure of a heavy debt; with a salary

paid long after it was due, in a depreciated currency; at a time when laborers were scarce and dear; and in the midst of disease, which carried his whole family to the grave; he put his trust in God, and continued with unabated zeal in his appropriate work. If we look attentively at his circumstances during the Revolutionary war, as he himself has detailed them, we can hardly avoid the conclusion, that if any minister could be justified in relaxing his efforts in his sacred calling, to attend for a season to his secular concerns, he was the man. But this indulgence, which so many take, and which not a few consider to be right, he never claimed.

Though his farm was large, and the labor required upon it not inconsiderable, yet he always carried it on entirely by the aid of others. He exerted himself to procure good help, and to do it seasonably; but when a man was found competent to the undertaking, the whole care of the business was thrown upon him. The Doctor merely exercised such a superintendence of his concerns as was unavoidable, and which he could do, without any interruption to his studies, or parochial labors. He would never allow those in his employ to depend upon his assistance in their work, in any emergency whatever. If they laid out more than they could do, or failed to prepare themselves for emergencies which might occur, and by this miscalculation or neglect got themselves into difficulty, they were taught never to expect relief from any personal exertions of his. Though he sometimes walked out among his laborers, and for his own recreation took hold of their tools, and wrought with them for a few moments, yet he would sooner see the waste or ruin of his crops, than have it understood that he might be called off from his studies, to assist in the labors of his farm. The inflexibility of his purpose on this subject, may be seen from such facts as the following. At a time when a large quantity of his hay lay exposed in the field, his men were suddenly alarmed at the prospect of rain. They at once concluded that they could not secure it, unless they had assistance, and it was now too late to go abroad for help. Though they knew that in ordinary circumstances it would be in vain to expect any aid from him, yet as there was now so much at stake, and the loss to be sustained entirely his own, they thought it possible that he would so far relax from the rigidity of his habits, as to assist one of them in unloading a load of hay in the barn, while the other should get that in the field in readiness to carry in. Accordingly, one of them went to the Doctor's study, and told him that a shower was rapidly approaching, and that the hay must be wet unless he would give them aid in throwing

off a load in the barn. "Then let it be wet," said he; "I am not going to leave my work to do yours."

Those who knew his accommodating spirit, his readiness always to gratify the feelings of others, so far as he could consistently with his duty, and his daily habit of assisting the needy, will see in this, not the recklessness or unkindness which the apparently harsh expression might indicate to a stranger, but that strong guard against every temptation to turn aside from his appropriate work, for which he was so remarkable. The only conceivable motive for the above refusal, was a desire himself to avoid all undue attention to his secular concerns; and to prevent his help from depending upon him, or repeating their solicitations for his aid. He used to say in respect to all such solicitations, "If you say A, you must say B; and the safest way is not to begin the alphabet."

While able to preach, and actively engaged in the ministry, he would subject himself to no kind of secular labor, not even to harness his horse, or feed his cattle, or bring in his wood. He depended upon his hired men, or his children, to see that all these things were done for him. After he had closed the active duties of the ministry, and no longer felt himself under obligation to give his time and attention to this work, he would often wait upon himself and others, very pleasantly observing, "I have nothing else now to do."

It was not the mere loss of time which he regarded, in his total abstinence from all secular labor. He feared its influence upon his mind and habits of study. An intimate friend of his, and a brother in the ministry, once said to him, when conversing upon his habit of refraining from the usual modes of exercise which people adopt, "I should think, Doctor, that you would find it pleasant to labor in your garden an hour or two a day, and that this exercise would contribute to your health and mental vigor." "Too pleasant, I fear," said he. "If I were to labor an hour a day in the garden, or long enough to become interested in it, I should have my garden in my study all the rest of the day."

Dr. Emmons did not pretend to say that it was the duty of all ministers to abstain as strictly from secular labor as he did. Though he thought it their duty to give themselves to their work, that is to say, as entirely as their health and other circumstances will admit, and was often heard bitterly to lament the fact that many are culpably negligent in this respect; yet he was fully aware that every one had not the constitution which God had given him, or natural ability to endure that degree of confinement to which he cheerfully submitted. He was willing to believe that others might find it necessary, some on account

of their health, and some on account of the scantiness of their support, to be engaged to some extent in manual labor, or teaching, or some other literary or scientific pursuit. It was a maxim with him that every man ought to study himself and his circumstances, or, in other words, the movements of Divine Providence with respect to him, and shape his course of action accordingly. But while he was thus candid in regard to others, who think it their duty to give their attention in some degree to secular concerns, he felt himself sacredly bound to give his whole time and strength to the ministry. The consecration which he at first made of himself to this work was unreserved; and he retained through life a fixed and unwavering purpose that no other should engage his attention or his heart.

The industry with which he pursued his sacred calling was in proportion to the ardor of feeling with which he had devoted himself to it. While he separated himself from every other pursuit, and called off his attention from every other subject, it is natural to suppose that his industry in his appropriate work would be unceasing. This was the fact. He was never idle. Nor was he slow and inefficient in his action. His movements both of mind and body were unusually rapid and energetic. He was always in his place; he was always engaged in his appropriate business; and whatever his hand found to do he did with all his might. A single fact, which it may not be improper here to name, will show what were the impressions of people in respect to his industry, and especially in respect to his habits of study. A Mr. Brown, who had been a student of his and a boarder in his family, shortly after he began to preach, became deranged, and fancied himself to be, as he said, "in the other world." Though perfectly beside himself in respect to this point, yet he would reason with great composure and strength upon other subjects, and in conversation with his friends would often attempt to reason on this also. While on a visit at the Doctor's, sitting one day with the family in the parlor, he introduced his all absorbing subject, and began to name one fact after another, to prove that he was "in the other world." Some of those present queried with him on this subject. This led to a pleasant, but very animated debate, in which he defended his position with great ingenuity and earnestness. In the midst of the conversation, Dr. Emmons, having been out some time, came in, and, perceiving the object of the debate, sat down and listened to Brown's argument. As soon as Brown saw him seated with the family, he turned with an air of triumph to his opponents, and, pointing to the Doctor, exclaimed, "See, there is demonstration that this is the other world. Dr. Emmons is out of his study, and is now sitting here with the

family; and you all know that no such thing ever happened in the old world."

Though it is not true that Dr. Emmons never sat with his family, yet so uniformly was he in his study when at home, and so well known were his habits in this respect, that the wit of the maniac had a peculiar point; and, while it produced a general burst of laughter, put an end to the debate.

In the entire consecration of himself to the work of the ministry, and in the extraordinary industry with which he pursued his work, we have, it is apprehended, the great secret of his success in his attempts to elucidate and defend the doctrines of the gospel. Though his talents were unquestionably of a superior order, and the cast of his mind just such as was suited to the work which he undertook; yet, without the efforts which he made to keep himself disentangled from the cares of the world, and the unexampled industry with which he pursued his employment, the present result of his labors would have been an impossibility. Perhaps it may in truth be said, that in nothing has he shown his wisdom in a higher degree, than in the adoption of the very means which were suited to the accomplishment of the great end he had in view; and perhaps his decision and firmness are in nothing more manifest than in his perseverance, through all the temptations of life, in the course in which alone his object could be attained.

A better illustration of the entire devotion of Dr. Emmons to his work, and his untiring industry in it, cannot be given than by a list of his publications. Besides those included in the present edition of his works, the following are from his pen:

A Dissertation on the Qualifications for Communion, in answer to Rev. Dr. Hemmenway, A. D. 1793.
Candid reply to Dr. Hemmenway, A. D. 1795.
On praying for perfection, New York Theological Magazine, Vol. I. 254.

In the Massachusetts Missionary Magazine.

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*On Casting Lots, p. 303.

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* Republished in Utica Christian Magazine.

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† Utica Repository also.

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Besides the preceding publications of Dr. Emmons, there are others in the Christian Visitor, Evangelical Magazine, National Preacher and New England Telegraph.

* Also in Hopkinsian Mag.

CHAPTER III.

HIS CHARACTER AS A WRITER. — AS A PREACHER. — AS A PASTOR. AS A CITIZEN.

In a memoir prefixed to his works, there seems to be little necessity of saying any thing of him as an author. The contents of the accompanying volumes will exhibit his character in this respect more perfectly than it can be described; but still it may not be improper here just to glance at some of the qualities by which his writings are distinguished. There is some variety in his style; but all this variety may be expressed by what Dr. Blair would term plainness, neatness, and elegance. For the most part, his style may be said to be plain, or neat. In many passages it is elegant. But whether it be clothed with a greater or less degree of ornament, it is always eminently perspicuous. Perspicuity is its distinguishing characteristic. It is read without effort. So perfectly naked are his thoughts, that his reasoning upon the most profound subjects in theology is read with less effort of the mind than a common paragraph in a newspaper. A feeble minister was a short time since heard to say that he could read Emmons's sermons on the Sabbath, after being so exhausted by the labor of the day, that he could not endure conversation, nor even read a religious periodical.

In all his discourses he has an object at which he aims. This is always one of great interest and importance. His plan for the attainment of his object is often so natural and so plain, that it seems to be the only one that could with propriety be adopted; and yet it is often one which nobody ever thought of before.

The following description of the style and sermons of Dr. Emmons, by the author of the *Triangle*, is so graphic and just, that no reader will be displeased with its insertion in this place.

"I shall not pronounce on the peculiar opinions of Emmons. Whether they are correct or not, I leave to the decisions of that day which shall rectify every error, and bring truth to light. But they are surely not of a nature which ought to interfere with Christian fellowship and communion. But Emmons, regarded as a sermonizer, is surpassed by few writers of that class, either living or dead; and few sermons, considered in all respects, are superior to his. His subjects, generally important, are judiciously selected, and skilfully raised out of an appropriate text. His sermons are read with ease and pleasure; with pleasure, because his object is perfectly obvious, his conceptions clear, and his arrangement natural and luminous; and with ease, because short and always rapidly progressing. '*Semper festinat ad*

eventum.' Emmons is an original of the noblest class, and certainly one of the most decided character. No candid reader who reads for instruction, is disappointed, or rises from the perusal of one of his sermons without some benefit. His sermons generally indicate extensive knowledge and acuteness of judgment. His style is neat, appropriate, pure, and correct, though less elegant and splendid than that of Hall, and less easy and graceful perhaps than that of Jay. In fervency and pathos, we may have some in our own country who excel him; and his sermons are, perhaps too didactic — too much the essay, and not sufficiently the popular address, to answer, in the best manner, all the ends of preaching. With less of the flowers of May, or fruits of October than some others, his sermons may be compared to the meridian hour of a clear day in June, when the Sun puts forth his strength, the Summer displays her maturity, and Vegetation all her energy.

"The reader of Emmons's sermons is like one passing over an extensive and well-cultivated farm; the fences are substantial and erect; the fields are verdant, square, and regular, not *triangular;* the meadows are separated from the woodlands, and the pastures from the tillage; the mansion house is not lofty, but neat and spacious, and speaks itself the seat of wealth, but not of dissipation — of happiness, but not of ambition. The prospects are diversified with hills and valleys, and enriched with springs and rivulets.

"The audiences who heard Emmons have heard more truth, and are better instructed, waiving all peculiar and discriminating points, than those who heard Davies or Witherspoon; and trusting that time will cure prejudices, and assured that selfishness will soon yield the ground to a benevolence *purely disinterested,* I frankly declare, that I would as lief be thought the writer of the sermons of Emmons as of Watts or Baxter, Hall or Fuller, Sherlock or Tillotson, Saurin or Claude, Bossuet or Bourdaloue.

"After the critic has screwed up his nose, scowled, hissed, snuffed, tossed, and pronounced a few such phrases as "ignorance! — no taste! — impudence!" and the like; I would request him to read a sermon of Davies, of Saurin, of Baxter, of Sherlock, of Massilon, and of Emmons; and then ask himself which of them conveys the most important truth, with fewest words, most simplicity and force, least affectation and labor, and greatest clearness. I must caution him, however, to break fairly through the blinding halo that surrounds great names; to be on his guard against the splendor of the great assemblies of London and Paris, where nobles and monarchs worship; to fortify his auditory nerves against the titillation of pompous phrases, and majestic circumlocution, which add little to the force, beauty, or impression of truth.

"A sermon is, or ought to be, a portion of the gospel of Christ, adapted to the attention of a public audience. Its style and manner may be compared to the vessels on which a public feast is served up. Important truth is the food itself. Now, the service of dishes may be of gold, silver, porcelain, or common earthen-ware, pewter, or even

wood. Some forty years ago, when the good people of this country used to eat on wooden trenchers, even a pewter service was thought quite splendid and luxurious. Emmons treats his audience in a handsome service of silver; and if there are those who can go as high as gold, enriched with diamonds, I am glad. Let it be remembered, however, that very indifferent food may be served up in gold, and many a deadly draught has lurked in a golden goblet."

The sermons of Dr. Emmons are written in an argumentative, but not in a controversial manner. Though he was powerful in argument, and not altogether unconscious of his ability to detect and expose the errors of the times, yet he was not disposed to engage to any great extent in public controversies. His "Dissertation on the scriptural qualifications for admission and access to the Christian Sacraments," and his "Candid Reply" to Dr. Hemmenway's Remarks on that publication; his Review of the Sermon of Mr. S. on the subject of Submission in a letter to his neice, and his reply to Dr. Smalley upon "The Doings of the Unregenerate;" are rare specimens not only of logical acumen, and controversial tact, but of Christian candor and courtesy towards an opponent.

The quality of his writing constituted one of his leading traits as a preacher. It is well known that he was uniformly heard with deep attention and interest. Whether his auditors believed or disbelieved, liked or disliked what he said, they could not help *hearing* him; and generally speaking the interest excited was equal to the attention. The writer of this article has heard him about as many times as he has heard Dr. Griffin, who has been styled "the prince of preachers" in New England. And while he remembers with unabated delight and admiration the eloquence of this wonderful man, he can truly say that the attention given to him was not more uniform and profound than that given to Dr. Emmons. The form, the attitude, the voice, and the gestures of Griffin were more commanding than those of Emmons. He could thunder and lighten, raise the admiration and excite the astonishment of his hearers. By an occasional happy thought, clothed in language corresponding with its weight and importance, and uttered with the peculiar emphasis which the varied tones of his mighty voice could give, he would electrify his audience, and produce impressions for the moment which Emmons could never make. But after all, he did not hold the attention more closely, nor impart a greater amount of instruction, nor excite a deeper interest, nor make more salutary and lasting impressions. Though there was nothing imposing in Emmons' manner, nothing which at first struck the attention of the multitude, or excited

any high expectations respecting him; yet whenever he got the ear of his audience he kept it. It was not to his person, to his attitude or gestures, to his style of writing, to the tones of his voice or to any thing else in his manner of speaking, that their attention was directed. When he arose to address an assembly, the first thing that arrested their attention to any considerable degree was the truth presented before them. This almost invariably appeared in such an attitude as to excite at first a degree of curiosity in the hearer, either in respect to the proof that should be exhibited in its favor, or in its consistency with other acknowledged truth, or the uses to which it should be applied. His proof and illustrations would usually be so clear, concise, and conclusive, that the interest of the audience would increase at every step in his argument, and at the close, entire satisfaction would be felt. In the application of his subject, every doctrine and every duty which he inferred from his main proposition would appear so obviously connected with it, that those who had given their assent to the one could not withhold it from the other. By his first inference he would often show his audience that in consenting to the truth of his main proposition they had given up the ground entirely on which they were accustomed to stand in the defence of some favorite error, or sin. In these circumstances, their curiosity to know what was coming next would often be intense. As he progressed, the original truth would be constantly held up before them, and every time it was repeated, it would come associated with all the proof and illustrations to which they had just attended, and to which they had given their assent, and from the force of which they now found it impossible to escape; and what was still more surprising, at every re-appearance it would introduce some other truth, indissolubly connected with itself, and which could not be denied without giving up all they had received. Every eye would be upon him. The stillness of the grave would pervade the assembly. Emotions of high gratification and delight would be seen upon the countenances of some, while conviction, alarm, opposition, solemnity and all sorts of feelings, would often be indicated by the looks of others.

The power of Dr. Emmons as a preacher, did not however consist entirely in the structure of his sermons. He had some peculiar excellences as a speaker. He was free from all affectation, and spoke in the pulpit with his natural, conversational tone of voice. He always got into his subject, fully imbibed its spirit, and spake under the influence of this and nothing else. Though his words made no noise, they were always alive. No man ever succeeded better in uniformly making

each of his hearers feel that he was speaking to him. His sparkling, penetrating eye, and perfectly natural tone of voice, gave a directness and power to his manner, which was sometimes almost irresistible.

A most important part of a pastor's work, is to feed his flock. No care which a shepherd can take of his sheep will prove a successful means of their comfort and growth, if they be not supplied with proper food. The only food which can sustain the flock of Christ, and by which their thrift and happiness can be promoted, is divine truth. The effort which Dr. Emmons made to enrich his mind with a knowledge of divine truth, and impart this to his people, in a manner suited to all their various circumstances, proves him to have been a devoted pastor. He studied hard, that he might be able always to give his people truth and not error. He aimed to teach them the truth on all subjects on which they needed religious instruction. He labored to select that portion of truth, which at the time was adapted to the character and circumstances of those whom he addressed. He made it an object to present the truth with so much simplicity and plainness, that they could not help understanding it. He never felt that the great object of his ministry, in respect to any of his flock, was secured, until, with the blessing of God, he had led them to receive the truth in love, and to make it the guide of their lives.

He was a watchful pastor. He kept an eye upon all his flock. From his studious and retired habits, many have inferred that he knew but very little about his people, or of what was going on among them. But such have entirely mistaken the man. He took great pains to be acquainted with all his people; and in the prime of his life, there were very few among them who were not well known to him, either in person or by their characters. Every part of his parish, and every individual in it, with whom he was acquainted, was an object of his almost daily consideration. He inquired into their belief and practice, on the subject of religion. He always noticed their attendance upon, or neglect of the means of grace. Whether they were saints or sinners, was a question of great apparent solicitude with him. He noticed with special interest the conduct of professors, and seriously considered the influence which, in their respective circumstances, they were exerting upon the cause of Christ. He always had his eye on the town, and upon men of influence in the town, and traced the bearings of every important transaction among them upon their religious interests. He noticed in a very intelligent and devout manner, every dispensation of Divine Providence, with which either individuals, or the great body of his people were seriously affected; and

always endeavored to make it a source of instruction, warning, or reproof, as the case might require. He watched the aged in the decline of life, to see the effect of their past conduct upon their latter end; and of the influence of their example upon the rising generation. He watched those of his flock, who were in the meridian of life, and considered with deep interest the influence which their respective occupations were likely to exert upon themselves and others. He was never unmindful of the youth of his congregation. Their connection with religious or irreligious parents, the means of education which they enjoyed, the occupations in life which they pursued, and even the amusements in which they indulged themselves, were all objects of his thought; and the good or evil effects which these things were likely to produce upon their spiritual condition, gave him great pleasure or pain. He always had his eye upon the literary, religious, and political publications of the day; upon the movements of the different religious denominations; the doings of ecclesiastical bodies; the plans and operations of ministers; and the state of religion in the community, especially in his own neighborhood; and never failed to consider minutely the probable influence for good or evil, which these things would have upon his own people. He often alluded to all these things with much feeling, both in private conversation and his public discourses.

He was an affectionate pastor. No minister was ever more sincerely and ardently attached to his people than he. He sympathized with them in all their enjoyments, and in all their sufferings. In the sick chamber, and at the house of mourning, he was not only peculiarly appropriate and instructive in his conversation and prayers, but peculiarly kind and sympathetic. His own deep affliction, in the early part of his ministry, was, in his estimation, instrumental of improving his feelings in respect to the afflicted, and of preparing him to meet them in a more appropriate and acceptable manner.

The following notice of Dr. Emmons by the Hon. Tristam Burges of Rhode Island, is a satisfactory testimony to the kind and sympathetic manner in which he treated the afflicted.

"With Dr. Emmons I was personally acquainted. His excellence as a distinguished preacher of the gospel, is known and acknowledged universally. In this eminent department I, many years ago, knew and admired him. Before that time, he had become endeared to me by another kind of excellence. Though a stranger to him, and not then residing in his parish, 'I was sick and he visited me.' To know him as he really was, you must have met him by the bed of pain, prostration, and anxiety. Here I first saw him; and such was his

discourse, so pious, so parental, so consoling, that it never has, and I think never will be forgotten by me. For at this moment, he lives in my memory as he then sat by my bedside, the very image, it seemed to me, of his great and gracious Master."*

He was a faithful pastor. He did not suffer the feelings of kindness, which he always cherished towards his people, to degenerate into a weak connivance at their sins. They were as sure to feel his rebukes when their conduct was known to be censurable, as they were to receive his sympathy in the day of trouble. He was wise in regard to the time, manner, and circumstances of giving reproof. But no offender could long sit under his preaching, or be in the habit of familiar intercourse with him, without receiving, in some form or other, decisive evidence that his conduct was understood and disapproved. His people felt that they were under his eye, and anticipated reproof whenever their guilt was known. His pastoral supervision was a constant source of encouragement to the righteous, and of restraint to the wicked.

His character as a pastor, as well as a preacher and a divine, was peculiarly his own. He imitated other ministers in the discharge of his pastoral duties only so far as their movements appeared to him, upon the most careful scrutiny, to be both wise and good. He visited the sick always when they sent for him, and when they requested public prayers. A request for prayers, he uniformly received as an intimation that a visit would be acceptable, and acted accordingly. He did sometimes call upon the sick without waiting for either of these formalities; as upon a near neighbor when suddenly attacked by a dangerous disease, or upon persons in similar circumstances at a distance, when called by some other providence into their vicinity. But he thought it best both for him and the people to have it understood, that, as a general rule, they must signify their wish, if they desired to see him. He then always knew what to do, and they what to expect.

His method of instructing the youth of his society, he has given in his own memoir of his life. It was by meeting them in the several school districts, and teaching them the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, the same which was generally adopted by the pastors in New England in the early part of his ministry. His catechetical lectures were attended by great numbers, and gave him free access to nearly all the children of his parish. It will naturally be supposed, that such a man as he is known to have been, would be peculiarly interesting and instructive in

* Extract from a letter addressed to Rev. Thomas Williams, by Hon Tristam Burges.

these exercises. Such we are assured, by some who uniformly attended them, was the fact.

Dr. Emmons took a bolder and more decided stand in regard to the influence of other denominations among his people than pastors in general do. Every minister of the gospel who has at their request consented to take the oversight of a people in the Lord, and has been solemnly set apart as a spiritual watchman upon the walls of this portion of Zion, wishes to see them united; and of course is indisposed to have ministers of other denominations come, without his invitation or consent, and appoint and hold meetings in the midst of his flock. He knows that this has a direct and powerful tendency to divide them; that it is not doing to others as we would that they should do to us; that it is a gross abuse of the liberty which Christ has given to his ministers; and that whatever may be the influence of the gospel thus preached, upon a few who perceive no wrong in the proceeding, its ultimate effects, if not overruled by him who brings good out of evil, must be irregularity, disorder, confusion, and every evil work among the churches of Christ. But though these are substantially the feelings of all pastors in respect to the unrequested labors of sectarians among their flocks, yet they generally bear their grief in silence; and often, either through fear of giving offence by an unreserved expression of their feelings, or the hope of curing the evil by letting it alone, rather countenance than oppose them. But Dr. Emmons adopted entirely a different course. Though he was glad to see ministers of other denominations, and treated them with great attention and kindness when they called upon him, making them as welcome to the hospitalities of his house as those of his own persuasion; yet if they proffered their services to his people without his request, he not only felt, but expressed displeasure. He doubted the purity of their motives when they left their own charge and came without his request to minister to his flock; and he openly denounced their conduct as unfair and disorderly. Though he knew that the gospel preached through much contention would sometimes produce some good present effects; yet as he was fully persuaded that meetings gotten up and conducted in this disorderly manner were wrong in themselves, and tended to more hurt than good, he uniformly and openly advised his people not to attend them; and if they did attend, he would charge them with an abuse of their liberty, and reprove them for inconsiderateness and irregularity. Nor would he spare the preacher, if he could find access to him. He has been known to deal with great plainness and severity with some who ventured to intrude their services upon his flock, and also with others who proposed to do the same. The

honesty, decision and boldness with which he expressed his feelings on this subject, as well as others, may be seen by the relation of a single fact, which is said to have occurred when he was in the midst of his days. A very respectable clergyman of another denomination was solicited by a gentleman in Franklin to come and preach at his house, and as Dr. Emmons thought, with a view to make an impression upon his people in favor of the peculiarities of that denomination. Shortly after receiving the invitation, this clergyman met Dr. Emmons in Boston, and told him that he had been invited to come and give his people a sermon. The Doctor very pleasantly replied, "You have a very important sphere of labor assigned you where you are. You need not take the trouble to come to Franklin. I can take care of my own flock." But said the clergyman, "You will not object to my coming." The Doctor understanding by this that he was still inclined to come, notwithstanding the hint which had been given him, made the following characteristic reply. "I do object. And if you come to Franklin in our present circumstances, I'll consider and treat you as a wolf in sheep's clothing." This clergyman never came. He doubtless saw upon reflection the gross impropriety of leaving his own charge and breaking into the enclosure of a distant flock, contrary to the known wishes of him whom the Holy Ghost had made their overseer. The difference between Dr. Emmons and other ministers, in regard to the influence of sectarians among their people, is not so much in feeling as in action. In at least nine cases out of ten, other clergymen would have felt just as he did, in regard to the proposed labors of this brother. But, perhaps, there is not one in a hundred who would have expressed them with the same honesty and decision.

There was a difference between the practice of Dr. Emmons and that of most other ministers, in regard to pastoral visits. He did not, in ordinary circumstances, go from house to house to talk and pray with his people. He was remarkably attentive to them in sickness, and in trouble of any kind, when they manifested a desire to see him. On all these occasions, he was peculiarly prompt in his visits, and kind and faithful in his intercourse with his people. But in ordinary circumstances, he did not visit his people. He believed that he could do them more good, by laboring for them in his study. Though he thought that a minister ought to be acquainted with his people, and maintain a familiar intercourse with them; yet he believed there was a better way of doing this, especially for him, than the common mode of pastoral visitation. He encouraged his people to visit him, and to open their minds freely on all subjects on which they wished for religious instruction. It was understood

by his people that he was glad to see them at his house for this purpose, and to converse with them upon those subjects which lay with weight upon their minds. His people availed themselves of the opportunity which he gave them. The members of his church frequently called upon him, and encouraged their children and families and others to do the same. When they called, an opportunity was given them, if they wished it, of conversing with him alone in his study. He sometimes sent for individuals in his parish whom he wished to see, and when they were retired with him alone he would converse with them with great plainness, affection and fidelity. He seldom conversed with individuals in a family upon the subject of their own feelings or personal condition before each other, because as he used to say, they would not, unless very specially interested, converse freely.* He thought it was laboring to great disadvantage to undertake to converse particularly with the members of the same family on the subject of their own feelings, in the presence of each other. On this account he chose to see them at his study, rather than at their homes. The loss of time attending it was another reason why he did not adopt the common method of pastoral visitation. Frequently the persons whom the minister goes to see are not at home; and if at home, they are perhaps engaged in some business which they cannot without great inconvenience leave; or if disengaged, they may be so connected with others either of their own family or visiters from abroad, that he cannot accomplish the purpose of his errand. By the experiments which he had made on this subject, Dr. Emmons was led to conclude that it would be a great saving of time to see his people at his study.

The plan of intercourse with his people which he adopted, he adopted for himself, without pretending to say that this is the best plan for other ministers. He made much of the maxim, "Know thyself." He was often heard to say that "some ministers have a peculiar talent for conversing with individuals and families on religion, and can do more good in this way than they can by preaching; and it is important that those who have this talent should know it, and pursue such a course as will enable them to improve it to the greatest advantage." But he knew that the most efficient way in which he could operate upon his people and do the most good in the world, was by studying and preaching. In the discharge of these duties, he felt himself

* In a revival, when his people were so much interested in their feeling on the subject of religion as to be willing to talk, he would converse with them any where. After a lecture at the meeting house he would sometimes request those who were disposed to converse with him to tarry, and sometimes more than half the congregation would stop either to converse, or hear.

to be in his own proper element, wielding the instrument which God had put into his hand. That he might have his time for study, was the great reason why he relinquished his pastoral visits in the usual form; and near the close of life, he said himself that he thought he had acted wisely in so doing. "If I were to live my life over again," said he, "I would pursue the same course." Others, who are the best acquainted with his talents, and who have seen the effects of the course which he pursued, generally think that he acted wisely. And even strangers, who are familiar with the productions of his pen, have expressed the same opinion. A remark which dropped from the lips of Rev. Gordon Hall, a little before he left his country for India, gives us the impressions of a devoted missionary, of no ordinary discernment, on this subject. While this man of God was residing at Andover, a conversation took place among the students upon the duty and importance of pastoral visits. In this conversation, some one stated the fact that Dr. Emmons did not visit his people, except on special occasions, and that the omission was the result of a sincere conviction that he could do them more good by spending his time in his study. Hall then replied, "Though I admit that pastoral visits are important, and may with propriety occupy a proportion of most ministers' time, yet I do think that the man who can write as Dr. Emmons does, ought not to be diverted from his studies by these things."

The subject of this Memoir was a warm friend of liberty. He espoused the cause of the people in the time of their contest with the British crown, and gave his influence in favor of the general principles and measures by which the unrighteous demands of the mother country were resisted. Though a minister of the gospel, truly devoted to his work, and peculiarly scrupulous in regard to every thing which had the appearance of inconsistency with his high vocation, yet he always felt that he had important duties to perform as a citizen. He carried his religion into every department of life, and acted in reference to the affairs of state, with the same regard to the authority and glory of God and the present and future good of mankind, which he maintained in the discharge of his professional duties. He believed that human governments ought to be based upon the great principles of equity and justice which are inculcated in the scriptures, and that those who rule over men ought to "be just, ruling in the fear of God." He therefore felt it to be his duty, not only to pray for all that were in authority, but to use his influence in every proper way to put good men into office, and to sustain them in their efforts to maintain a righteous government. He believed that the right of suffrage belongs to ministers as truly as to other men, and

that they are under esssentially the same obligation to use it as any other class of citizens; and with the same independence which was characteristic of him in all other cases, he uniformly went to the polls and deposited his vote for the man of his choice. He was no partisan either in his feelings or conduct. He fomented no political disputes, attended no caucuses, and used none of the arts, intrigues, or management which are common among politicians in securing their object. But he always had his opinion, spoke it freely, and acted with openness and decision according to it. He was unwilling to have his people believe, as many seem to do, that religious principle is useless in politics, while it is of acknowledged importance in every thing else. He taught them their obligations not only to act as citizens, but to act righteously in all their civil, as well as religious concerns. He looked at the conduct of politicians and the actions of civil governments, as they are suited to affect both the temporal and spiritual interests of men. Though he believed that Christ's "kingdom is not of this world," yet he knew that the kingdoms of this world were destined to exert an important influence upon the church, and the church upon the world. As he watched the effects of every civil movement in his own town upon the cause of religion there, so he watched the movements of the great men of the nation and of the world, and considered with the deepest interest their probable influence upon the kingdom of Christ. It is impossible that such a mind as his, tracing, as it did, causes to their remotest conceivable effects, should not feel a very deep interest in political as well as religious action. It is not strange, especially if we consider the times and circumstances in which he lived, that he frequently touched upon subjects which had a political bearing. He could not have taught the people the obligations which he saw them under, without it. He could not have reproved the sins which he saw committed in "high places," without it. He could not have warned either his own people or the public against the dangers to which he saw them exposed, without it. On the Sabbath his discourses were uniformly confined to subjects strictly religious. But on Fast and Thanksgiving days, he would often introduce others of a somewhat secular or political character, with a view to show the people not only the bearing which these things had upon their temporal condition, but their moral and religious aspect.

In the choice of these topics, he was guided by the circumstances of the times. If he saw among the people a general opposition and insubordination to righteous authority; he would preach upon the duty of "obedience to magistrates." If the rulers were oppressive in their measures, and regardless of the

repeatedly expressed wishes of their constituents; he would preach and publish a discourse upon "the rights of the people." If he saw a general destitution of religious principle in the community, and a tendency to substitute expediency for duty; he would raise his voice, and under the sanction of the word of God proclaim that "gain is not godliness." When the people became divided among themselves in respect to the principles of government, and began to cherish towards each other alienated and hostile feelings; he would endeavor to check the rising tide by a discourse upon "the ruinous tendency of divisions." If he discerned a spirit of skepticism and unbelief generally prevalent among the people, especially in the higher ranks of society; he would warn them of "the demoralizing influence of infidelity." The origin and extent of human authority, the importance of good government, the proper means of sustaining it, the character of the good citizen, and the obligations which the members of every civil community are under to each other as well as to God, with numerous other topics of a similar character, he was accustomed to discuss on Fast and Thanksgiving days. The principles which he illustrated and applied were sound and important. Few, if any, of his political opponents would deny either the truth or importance of his principles; although they did object, and would probably now object to the application of them which he occasionally made. The candid and intelligent of all parties may now read the sermons, which he preached in times of the highest political excitement which the country has ever seen, and they will not only approve of the general sentiments advanced, but admire the manner in which they are illustrated. They will of course differ in regard to the propriety, or impropriety of their application. A gentleman in his immediate vicinity, who was always known to be among his opponents in politics, was not long since heard to say, "I often heard the Doctor preach what were called his political sermons, about which so much noise was made at the time, and I always liked him. The principles which he advanced were true, and such as I believe the Bible inculcates." It was understood at the time this was said, that the gentleman did not, in every case, approve of their application. To suppose that under all the exciting circumstances in which the Doctor lived, he never cherished an opinion too favorable to the conduct of his own party, or too unfavorable to that of his opponents; that the application of the great principles which he illustrated was always with strict impartiality, would be to suppose him more than a man. But no intelligent and candid man will deny that the discourses to which allusion is now made, embrace subjects of

the highest moment both to rulers and people; that these subjects are discussed with singular plainness and fidelity; that they may be read and studied with great profit by men of all political parties; and that, if carried out into general practice, the stability of our government, and the lasting prosperity of the nation would be secured.

His love of liberty, and the independence with which he maintained its great principles may be seen also from the fact that he preached against slavery while it was sanctioned by the laws of his own State, and persons were actually held in bondage by many of its citizens. In consequence of a discourse which he delivered on this subject, a member of his church, who owned a slave, immediately set her at liberty. She afterwards became a member of his family, lived in it twenty-three years, died there, and left her little property to his children. It is remarkable that he resembled Edwards and Hopkins, not only in the leading principles of their theology, but in their hostility to involuntary servitude, and in the fearless and decided manner in which they raised their voice against this sin.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS.

Much has been said respecting the theological opinions of Doctor Emmons. While not a few have received them, and thought them an improvement upon the theology of the age, others have considered them both false and dangerous. In the latter class, there are many well meaning and intelligent men, some of whom have read his works, and understand his system. But it is a fact which cannot be questioned, that those among the reputedly orthodox who consider his system essentially false, are generally speaking, persons who are partially or wholly unacquainted with his writings. A perusal of his works is that only which can give the reader a full and accurate knowledge of his opinions. But from the following document found among his papers after his decease, the complexion of his theology may at once be seen.

I have endeavored to show,

1. That holiness and sin consist in free voluntary affections or exercises.

2. That men can act freely under the divine agency.

3. That the least transgression of the divine law deserves eternal punishment.

4. That right and wrong are founded in the nature of things.

5. That the posterity of Adam are guilty of no sin, but their own free voluntary selfish affections.

6. That God exercises mere grace in pardoning or justifying penitent believers through the atonement of Christ, and mere *goodness* in rewarding them for their good works.

7. That the hearts of sinners are, by nature, totally depraved.

8. That God has a right, nothwithstanding their total depravity, to require them to turn from sin to holiness.

9. That preachers of the gospel ought to exhort sinners to love God, repent of sin, and believe in Christ immediately.

10. That sinners do not perform one holy and acceptable act until they exercise pure disinterested love.

11. That sinners must exercise unconditional submission to God, before they can exercise saving faith in Christ.

12. That men are active and not passive in regeneration.

These are doctrines which I have preached in the general course of my ministry, some of which I have endeavored to set in a clearer light than I have ever seen done by any others.

This outline of Christian doctrines will not be thought to comprise all the subjects on which he preached and wrote. They are but a few of the many which were made familiar to his people, and which are now to be found in his publications. Nor will it be thought, that all these are doctrines which are peculiar to him, or which no one else believed or taught before him. The object of this outline is merely to indicate the topics on which the leading features of his instruction might be seen.

The question has sometimes been asked, What has Doctor Emmons taught that is new? or what are the improvements which he has made in theological science? A full and definite answer to these questions would require a more extensive and perfect knowledge of theological opinions, than the writer pretends to possess. He does not hesitate to say, however, that Dr. Emmons has applied the principle of voluntary action to the subject of theology more successfully than any divine that has gone before him. If he was not the first that discovered the truth that all sin and holiness consist in action, or in voluntary exercises of the mind, he was the first to make an extensive use of this principle in explaining the doctrines of

the gospel. By common consent, the "Exercise scheme" is his. He not only believed with others, that much of the sin and holiness of men consists in their voluntary affections, but that all of it does; and this principle he carried out in all its bearings upon the subject of human depravity, the connection of Adam with his posterity, the doctrine of regeneration, the free agency and accountability of man, and the government of God.

From this principle it follows that the depravity of mankind is not a corrupt nature inherited from Adam, but their own voluntary opposition to God; that regeneration consists not in the implantation of a new principle distinct from the affections of the mind, but in a change in the affections themselves from sin to holiness; that God does not require men to alter the nature which he has given them, or to make themselves new faculties or powers, but to exercise that holiness of heart, for which he has given them the requisite capacity.

If the position that all holiness and sin consists in moral exercises be a mistake, and it is found to be true that mankind are really praise or blame worthy for that in which they have no activity; much of what Dr. Emmons has written, and which his friends highly esteem as important improvements in theology, will doubtless be found among "the wood, hay and stubble" which will be burned up at the last day. But if it be a fact that all sin and holiness primarily consists in moral exercises, it must be admitted that he has made great improvements in the theology of the age. Whether he was the first to discover this fact or not, it is certain that no other man has made so extensive and important use of it as he, in explaining, reconciling, and defending the doctrines of the gospel. Admit the fact, and the conclusion becomes irresistible. No intelligent man who admits the one, will deny the other.

That mankind are active while acted upon; or in other words, that they are free moral agents in doing that which the agency of God disposes them to do, is a distinguishing feature of Dr. Emmons' theology. The Arminian view of Stewart, Reid, Clarke and others, is, that just so far as the creature is free and accountable, so far he is independent of divine power and influence, and just so far as he is dependent, he is passive. Edwards rejected this principle in part, but not wholly. The same may be said of Hopkins; for they both held that the creature is passive in regeneration, and in receiving a sinful nature. But with his mind established in the truth, that all sin and holiness must consist in voluntary exercises, Dr. Emmons discovered, what it is strange no one ever discovered before, that man is active while acted upon. For ages it seems to

have been well understood, that sinners are acted upon by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. But Dr. Emmons perceived that the scriptures as clearly taught the agency of man in this change as the agency of God, and proved the entire consistency of the one with the other. Should it be said that others before him admitted this fact to some extent, and taught it in some instances, it will not be pretended that any one ever carried it out as he has done. He believed that God exercised a real, a universal and a constant agency over all his intelligent creatures, and that at the same time they enjoyed the most perfect freedom conceivable. He never made the agency of God limit the freedom of the creature, or the freedom of the creature counteract the will of God. In all his addresses to God, and descriptions of his character, he speaks to and of him, as doing all his pleasure in heaven above, and on earth beneath. In all his addresses to man, he speaks to and of him, as a free moral agent, capable of doing or not doing the whole will of God, and as accountable for the manner in which he improves the powers which God has given him.

With his views of human and divine agency, it is not difficult to see that the one is consistent with the other. It was his belief that the agency of God consisted entirely in his volition, and that the agency of man consists entirely in his volition. The agency of God in the conversion of Paul, for instance, was the *will* of the Holy Ghost that he should voluntarily turn from sin to holiness. The agency of Paul, in his own conversion, was the spontaneous surrender of his heart to that Saviour who was before the object of his hatred and persecution. Now with this view of divine and human agency, who can say that the one is inconsistent with the other? Who will affirm that there is even the *appearance* of inconsistency between them? Was Paul's voluntary surrender of his heart to Christ, in any way inconsistent with the choice or will of the Holy Ghost that he should do this? Was the power of Paul to receive the Saviour voluntarily, destroyed or in any way diminished by the will of God that he should thus receive him?

According to the definition of divine agency given by Dr. Emmons, all that God did to harden the heart of Pharaoh, or to move him to refuse to let the people go, was to *will* or *choose*, all things considered, that he should voluntarily or freely refuse to let them go. But was the exertion of such an agency as this upon him, in the least degree inconsistent with his own free moral agency? Could not Pharaoh himself refuse to let the people go when God chose he should do it, as well as though God had made no such choice? Could not Pharaoh act as *freely* in refusing to let the people go, under the influence of

the divine will that he should do so, as he could have done, if God had formed no choice respecting it? Or, in other words, did the will of God that Pharaoh should do this thing freely of his own accord, and in a manner perfectly consistent with his own accountability, have any tendency to prevent his doing it? These questions can receive but one answer. If both the agency of God, and the agency of men, in all their moral acts, consists in their volition, there is no conceivable inconsistency between them. Upon this supposition man is as really an agent, and as *free* an agent, as he could be if there were no other being in the universe.

If the definition of divine agency, which has been given by Dr. Emmons, is admitted, there is no longer any question as to its directness or indirectness. Many admit that God exerts an agency of some sort upon the hearts of men, while they contend that if this agency is positive and direct, it must destroy the free agency of man. But who would ever think of talking about an indirect or negative volition? or rather, who would think of denying that the will of God is always direct and positive? Is there any thing conceivable, which he does not either choose or refuse? He may bring an event to pass with means, or without them. But does he, or can he, render means in any case effectual, without *willing* their success?

Many, who object strongly to the writings of Dr. Emmons as carrying the doctrine of divine agency too far, fully believe with the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, "that God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass." They pretend also to receive the opinions of Calvin, Edwards, Bellamy and Dwight on this subject. But it is well known that all these divines, as well as the pilgrim fathers of New England generally, believed that the will of God respects all events. It was their united opinion, that all things take place according to his *choice*. Dr. Dwight says,* "All things, both beings and events, exist in exact accordance with the purpose, pleasure, or what is commonly called the decrees, of God." And after quoting Rev. iv. 11. "For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created," he observes, "In this passage it is asserted, that all things were created and exist, for the pleasure of God. It is irresistibly inferred, therefore, that they exist according to his pleasure." To what is expressed in these quotations, every orthodox man in New England will accede. But it is confidently believed, that they necessarily imply the most obnoxious opinions, which Dr. Emmons has ever expressed on the subject of divine agency. They certainly imply, that all things without

* See Dwight's Theology, sermon xv.

exception exist in accordance with the *will* or *choice* of God. Now if the agency of God consists in his *will* or *choice*, all things considered, then it follows without a question, that his *agency* is exerted in every event that takes place.

But it will probably be said, that these divines did not mean the same thing by the agency of God as Emmons did. Though they admitted, with him, that the will of God respects every event, yet they did not believe that his agency consists in mere volition. Perhaps they all did not. Their ideas on this subject are not very definitely expressed. But did any of them believe that God *does* nothing to bring to pass what he wills or chooses, all things considered, shall take place? Or, in other words, does he in any case forbear to *act* in reference to the object of his choice? This will not be pretended. It then follows undeniably, that his agency is as universal and particular as the objects of his choice. Besides, Dr. Dwight not only admits that the will of God respects all events, but that his agency consists in his volition, and in nothing else. His fifth argument in support of the proposition, That all things, both beings and events, exist in exact accordance with the purpose, pleasure, or what is commonly called the decrees of God, is in these words: "*This choice of God that things should exist, is the only divine energy, and the only cause of existence.* The energy of mind is *its will;* and this is synonymous with *its choice generally understood;* each act of the will being no other than an act of choice. What is thus true of every *finite* mind, is eminently true of the Infinite Mind." Again he says, "It is metaphysically proper to say, *that God wills all things into existence;* or that they are produced by his choice, in the full sense in which any effect is said to be produced by its efficient cause."

It is not intended, by quoting this passage, to make it appear that Dr. Dwight actually believed on this subject just as Dr. Emmons did; but simply to show that all which the latter contends for on the subject of divine agency is necessarily *implied* in what the former has written; and that no man who admits the full and obvious import of the language used by the one, can consistently object to the real meaning of the other.

Some who think that Dr. Emmons' theory of divine agency makes God the author of sin, have opposed to this an indirect universal agency. Their meaning appears to be this: God does not directly operate upon the hearts of men, either in the production of sin or holiness; but has so arranged second causes, and designedly so arranged them, that the motives exhibited before the minds of men will produce just such a state of things as now exists. It is proper in their view to say that

the agency of God is universal, because he has made and arranged all the second causes which are in operation, with a view to the ultimate result. But he is not, properly speaking, the author of the sin or holiness of his creatures, because the agency which he exerts is the exhibition of motives to the mind, rather than a direct influence upon the heart. But what difference does it make as it respects the moral character of the action, whether God produces sin and holiness directly by his own agency upon the hearts of men, or by a designed exhibition of motives, which it is foreseen will certainly produce the same effect? If the old maxim, "*Qui facit per alium, facit per se*," be a true one, who will consider the latter mode of operation any more consistent with his goodness than the former? This theory does not meet the difficulty in the case fairly. It only puts it a little farther off, and thereby renders it the more difficult to manage. If there is any theory that will relieve the subject under consideration from embarrassment, it is that which has been adopted by Dr. Emmons, viz: That agency consists in volition, and that all men are active while acted upon.

But the improvement which Dr. Emmons has made in the science of theology does not consist so much in the discovery of truths entirely new, as in presenting those which have long been taught by others, in a more clear, definite and consistent light. In his investigations of older divines, he not only found many errors mingled with important truths, but many of these truths attempted to be sustained by unsound arguments. In numerous instances, he has made that perfectly plain which was before obscure, and reconciled propositions, which, as stated in the language of others, seemed to involve a contradiction. He used to say, "I have spent the greater part of my time in making joints."

Nothing which he has written has been more strenuously opposed than his views of unconditional submission. Though he has advanced nothing new on this subject, nothing more than was taught before him by Calvin and Hopkins, and many others; yet the opposition made to him as a preacher and writer has been as strong on this ground as on any other. He did teach that mankind ought to be conditionally willing to suffer the just punishment of their sins. His views on this subject may perhaps be the most advantageously exhibited in this place by quoting a letter, which he once wrote to a niece of his. She, it seems, had heard a Mr. S. preach a sermon, in which he raised a number of plausible objections against that kind of submission which Dr. Emmons was supposed to inculcate. She took notes of these objections, and sent them

to him, with a request that he would favor her with an answer to them. He wrote her the following letter.

My Dear Niece,—I have read Mr. S.'s arguments against unconditional submission, which appear to me more plausible than conclusive. Submission is as well understood, I believe, as resignation; and either term properly signifies a willingness to suffer any evil which God pleases to inflict. This willingness, however, does not imply any love to evil, but only love to God who inflicts it. Love to God is always implied in submission, which can flow from no other source. None but a regenerate person, or if you please, none but a christian, ever exercises submission to God under any evil which God inflicts, whether small or great. Indeed, the same spirit of benevolence which will dispose a person to submit to God under the least evil, will dispose him to submit to God under the greatest; because God appears as amiable in inflicting the greatest, as in inflicting the least evil. The difficulty, if there be any in this question, lies not in determining the nature or degree of submission, but in determining when any regenerate person or real christian ought to be willing that God should destroy him in a future state. To set this point in as clear a light as I can, I would observe,

1. That a person may be regenerated, and yet not know that he is so. Though regeneration consists in new affections, and he may know, in the time of it, that he does exercise new affections, yet he may not know that his new affections are holy affections; and consequently not know that he is the subject of a saving change, and a real child of God. He may be in this dark and doubtful state, for days, or weeks, or even for months, after his heart is renewed. This many a christian has declared when he made a public profession of religion.

2. A renewed person or real christian, who does not know that he is renewed, cannot know that he is entitled to eternal life, according to the promises of the gospel. Though it be true that he is entitled to eternal life, yet he sees no evidence of it so long as he sees no evidence of being a subject of saving grace. Therefore,

3. A regenerate person or real christian, in such a situation, must view himself as exposed to future misery. As he does not view himself as a believer, he must view himself to be an unbeliever, and actually deserving and exposed to the punishment of an unbeliever; or, in other words, he must suppose that God is as much disposed to punish him for ever as any other sinner.

4. While a regenerate person or real christian thus views himself under a sentence of condemnation, he certainly ought to be willing that God should execute that sentence of condemnation upon him. He certainly must be willing that God should do this, or else he is unwilling. But to be unwilling, is practically saying that God shall not reign over him, or dispose of him as shall be most for his own glory. Now I ask Mr. S., or any other person, how a real subject of grace ought to feel in such a situation as this? You will say he ought to desire salvation. I say so too. But ought he to desire salvation absolutely,

or unconditionally, whether he be a subject of grace or not? He does not know that he is a subject of grace, or that he ever will be. And therefore, he does not know but God is morally obliged, according to the threatening of his law, and according to his eternal decree, to cast him off for ever. And should he, in this situation, stand and contend with his Maker, or cordially submit? I am now ready to meet the arguments or objections which you mention.

Objection 1. — None but real christians do exercise the virtue of true submission to God's will under afflictions, or in the prospect of them.

Answer. — This is said, and meant, as an objection against those who advocate unconditional submission, and is really the substance of all Mr. S. has said to refute the doctrine he opposes; for all the absurdities he endeavors to point out, as arising from the doctrine, are supposed to arise from the character and condition of a real christian. But this is fighting against a man of straw, of his own make. The advocates of unconditional submission, who understand themselves, freely grant, that it is only the subjects of grace, or the real christian, that does exercise true submission. I know indeed that Mr. Hooker and Mr. Shepard maintained, that a sinner under awakening and conviction must be willing to be cast off for ever, in order to prepare him for regeneration or true conversion. This we acknowledge is an erroneous opinion; and no Hopkinsian that I am acquainted with adopts this opinion.

Objection 2. — If we suppose a person submissively résigned to future misery, we must suppose him, of course, to be a christian.

Answer. — Freely and fully granted, as being nothing to the purpose.

Objection 3. — We have, then, this incongruity presented. Here is a christian, resigned to future evil, which can by no possibility take place under the government of God. For God cannot, without a sacrifice of his veracity, permit a real christian to perish.

Answer. — Very true; but what then? Though God cannot permit a real christian to perish, and though a real christian, who knows he is a real christian, ought not to be willing that God should violate his promise, and cast him off for ever; yet, it by no means follows, that a real christian, who does not know that he is a real christian, ought not to be willing that God should cast him off for ever, if his own glory requires him to do it. And if he be not a christian, as he supposes he is not, he cannot know but the glory of God will require him to cast him off for ever. His duty is precisely the same in his supposed situation as it would be if he were not a real christian.

Objection 4. — It follows, then, as the evil in question is not, under the government of God, a possible one, that a supposed resignation to it is not, and cannot be true submission; for true submission is resignation to present evils, or to those which are certain in prospect. This, therefore, is imaginary submission. It costs but little, and is worth still less.

Answer. — A real christian may exercise as real submission to a supposed evil, as to a real one. And if he does not exercise as real submission to a supposed evil, as to a real one, he is as guilty, as if

the supposed evil had been a real evil. When Joseph's brethren came to their father and made him believe that Joseph had been torn to pieces by a wild beast, ought not Jacob to have been submissive to God under his supposed bereavement? And was he not criminal in feeling, and saying as he did? — "It is my son's coat: an evil beast hath devoured him: Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted." — Though his son was not dead, yet he verily believed that he was dead, and that God had bereaved him of his darling. In this belief he was altogether inexcusable in refusing to submit to God, and to be comforted. And surely, if he had submitted to this supposed, or if you please, imaginary evil, it would have cost him much, and been worth all the gold of Ophir. The application is easy. A real christian, who believes he is not a real christian, ought to be willing to suffer that future punishment, which God might inflict upon him, if he were, and always should be an impenitent sinner.

Objection 5. — Imaginary submission can never be a real test of Christian character. Actual submission only is evidence of it. Indeed, no state of mind which depends upon the future, can ever be at present, evidence of a Christian temper. We appeal, and must appeal, to past experience, or present actual experience only, for a test of our religion. Submission, then, to a supposed misery that is future, is no evidence to us of religion, unless that misery is so certain that it becomes present. But in the case supposed, the misery is not only future but actually impossible.

Answer. — Is it not a present evil, to expect and fear a future and eternal evil? Has it not been shown that a real christian, who does not know, nor think, that he is a real christian, has just ground to expect and fear a future and eternal evil? His fear is not imaginary, but real; and his submission ought not to be imaginary, but real. His case exactly resembles Jacob's. He supposed his son was dead; and his supposition, though not founded in reality, was yet founded upon credible evidence, and such as carried full conviction to his mind, and laid him under moral obligation to be really and immediately submissive to the supposed will of God; yea, to the real will of God; for it was his revealed will that he should be submissive to him in the mournful situation in which he had really placed him. So it is the real will of God, that a real christian, who does not know nor believe that he is a real christian, should be at that time, whether before or after he has had a hope, willing that he should cast him off for ever, if his glory requires it, as he does not know but it may. I now ask whether unreserved submission to the divine disposal, is not directly calculated to remove the doubts of a doubting christian; and whether any thing else can remove his doubts? Submission in this case is the test, and the only infallible test to himself of his Christian character. If a doubting christian comes to be submissive to God whether he should save or destroy him, he then has an infallible evi-

dence that he is a friend of God, and that God is his friend; which must remove his painful doubts.

Objection 6. — There are other difficulties still, attending this speculation. A state of future misery, involves a state of future disobedience and rebellion against God. And we have already seen that submission can never be opposed to obedience. Submission to a state of future disobedience is absolute rebellion.

Answer. — It is granted that present submission is inconsistent with present disobedience. No person in the actual exercise of submission to God, can, by that actual submission, disobey God. But how does it appear, that present submission to God is inconsistent with future disobedience to him? Does not a real christian, in the morning of life, desire that God would not take him away in the midst of his days, but allow him to live longer in this world? But does he not expect, that, if he should live to the common age of man, he shall be guilty of more or less disobedience to God in that period? Is he not, then, willing, at present, to disobey God in future? And is his present willingness to disobey God in future, when he has told him that he shall not be perfect in this life, present disobedience? It is real submission to a certain, expected evil, which he hates in its own nature. But if a christian may be submissive to God, in appointing him to disobedience in time, why may he not be submissive to God, in appointing him to disobedience in eternity? Supposing God had told Lucifer, the day before he disobeyed, I have determined that to-morrow you shall disobey. Ought not Lucifer to have said, from the heart, I submit: Not my will, but thine be done? And had he felt and said this, would his submission to future disobedience, have been present, actual disobedience? I leave it to Mr. S. to solve these cases of conscience, which I have mentioned.

Objection 7. — But the question sometimes comes up in this form: If we could be assured, that it would be for the glory of God that we should be cast off, ought we not to acquiesce? And, in answer to this, I have simply to observe, that such an assurance is absolutely impossible. God cannot break his promises. God cannot change his character. It cannot be for his glory that those should be miserable for ever, who are submissive to his will. Of what use is it, then, to state and reason from cases that are impossible ones, and subversive of the whole nature and government of God, if they should occur? Much more, how can it be a test of Christian character, to conjecture how we should act and feel, or ought to act and feel, in cases that are actually impossible?

Answer. — It is readily conceded, that a christian, who does not know nor believe that he is a christian, cannot be assured that it would be for the glory of God that he should be cast off; and it is asserted, on the other hand, that a christian, who does not know nor believe that he is a christian, cannot be assured that it would be for the glory of God that he should be saved. For God cannot break his promises, nor his purposes. The christian, who does not know that he is a christian, cannot know what God's purposes are respecting him; and

therefore, it is his present duty to be willing that He should execute his purposes, whether they are in his favor or against him. His present state of uncertainty requires him to exercise present submission, whether his future state should be either happy or miserable. And his present submission or opposition to God, in his present state of uncertainty, is a criterion, to determine whether he feels right or wrong at present; but not to determine whether he is a real christian or not. For though he may feel wrong in his present state of darkness, he may afterwards feel right, as Jacob did, after he had refused to submit and be comforted.

Objection 8. — It is again asked, Is it not the duty of those who are cast off, to submit to their condition? And if you will only view this question as it respects different considerations, it is very easy to answer it. As to that part of the future state of condemnation, which involves disobedience and rebellion, it is no duty to submit to this, but to become obedient and cease from rebellion. And in regard to actual misery, fallen spirits are bound to acknowledge the justice of God in it, and their full desert of it. But it is their duty to repent and reform, and, were it possible, to deliver themselves from misery, though we have reason to believe that they will never do this.

Answer. — The spirits in prison are undoubtedly bound cordially to acknowledge the justice of God in punishing them for ever, and cordially to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in continuing them in a state of moral depravity for ever. And the cordial acknowledgment of both the justice and sovereignty of God towards them, I should call perfect submission to God, both as to their sinfulness and misery.

Mr. S. concludes his arguments or objections against unconditional submission with the following general observations, which deserve some notice:

"On the whole it is a matter of regret, that this subject has been agitated in our churches. It is easy to perceive that much has been said upon it, without definite ideas of the nature of true submission; and much said against it with mistaken apprehensions of the design of those who advocate the affirmative. What is aimed at, I take to be these simple truths: The will of God is the rule of right, and creatures ought to submit to that will; the law of God is perfectly just, and we ought to approve of it, though it condemn our conduct; we ought to feel that we deserve to be cast off, and it is mere grace which delivers us from destruction. To these truths we all accede. Why not inculcate them then in this simple and intelligible form, and not endeavor to impress them by the statement of cases which are revolting to the feelings and impossible in the nature of things! Most of the disputants upon these subjects seem to me to have left submission undefined, and not to have distinguished between active obedience and suffering with resignation, or show how the one stood related to the other, or that the one can never interfere with the other.

Answer. — Will not all those who are finally cast off at the last day, be constrained to accede, in their understandings and consciences, to these simple truths: "That the will of God is the rule of right, and

creatures ought to submit to that will; that the law of God is perfectly just, and they ought to approve of it, though it condemn their conduct; that they ought to feel that they deserve to be cast off, and that it would have been mere grace to have delivered them from eternal sin and misery?"

But will those who are finally cast off exercise any true submission? Is a sense of moral obligation to obey God the same as obeying him? Is a sense of our desert of being punished for disobeying God, the same as submitting to his hand and heart in punishing us? Is there any thing in Mr. S.'s definition of submission, that an unregenerate man, remaining unregenerate, may not feel and express? I regret that the doctrine of unconditional submission, has not been better defined, and more repeatedly and forcibly inculcated in our churches than it ever has been, and especially of late. "Young men think old men to be fools;" but it would be well if young men would remember the last clause of the proverb.

Yours, affectionately,

NATHANAEL EMMONS.

CHAPTER V.

EFFECTS OF HIS MINISTRY. — THE HONOR WHICH GOD CONFERRED UPON HIM.

SOME have thought and said that the ministry of Dr. Emmons was unsuccessful. But there never was a greater mistake. His influence was, indeed, more like "the still small voice," than like the wind and the earthquake; but although comparatively noiseless and unobtrusive, it was powerful, pervading, and salutary. He has given us, in his Memoir, an account of three interesting revivals, which took place under his ministry, the first of which was very extensive and powerful. During the fifty-four years in which he performed the active duties of his office, there were added to his church three hundred and eight; thirty-six by letter, and two hundred and seventy-two by profession. If it be considered that the greater part of his ministry was during the great declension of religion in Massachusetts, when the enemy came in like a flood, when revivals of religion were little known, and when a majority of the churches in his vicinity were either overrun or torn asunder by the prevalence of Unitarianism and its kindred errors, these

facts indicate much more than ordinary success in the conversion of sinners. It is well known to the people in the immediate vicinity of his labors, that conversions among his people were much more frequent and striking, than in the neighboring societies generally. His success as a preacher was once a common subject of remark. The number that was added to his church during the long period of his ministry, is not indeed great for these days of revivals and increased population. But for the times in which the vigor of his life was spent, and for the population of the place in which he lived, it was uncommon.*

But the greatest success of Dr. Emmons did not consist in the number of sinners whom he was directly instrumental of converting. His influence in preserving his church and congregation from the corrupting influence of error, which in his day undermined the foundation of many generations, was a most important achievement. So thoroughly were they established in "the faith once delivered to the saints," that they were not even shaken in their faith by all the various forms of error with which they were assailed, or by the overwhelming popular influence which the friends of the misnamed liberal principles, for a long time, exerted around them. Only one or two of his church were affected with the prevailing heresies of the day. And the influence of these was immediately neutralized by the kind and faithful exercise of the discipline of the church. Though the leaven of error began to work in the congregation, and some few expressed their preference for "liberal Christianity," "falsely so called," yet the great body of the people remained firmly united with the church through all the changes that occurred in the vicinity, and in the face of all the efforts that were made to draw them off from the principles and practices of their fathers. While almost every other society in the county has been divided, and many of them subdivided, his people still remain one people, worshipping in the same temple, and adhering steadfastly to the great principles of the gospel which they were accustomed to hear from his lips.

It has often been said that the preaching of such doctrines as he preached, and especially the dwelling upon them so much as he did, is suited not only to prevent a revival of religion, but to divide and distract a people. But the experiment which he made proves very satisfactorily that it need not have either of

* It ought to be considered here, that the place of Dr. Emmons' labors was one from which a great multitude of young people emigrated. A large number of those who became pious under his ministry, professed their faith in other places. And he had not, as many preachers in our flourishing villages have at the present day, a great increase of hearers from abroad every year.

these effects. To a friend of his he writes: "In three or four seasons of special religious attention among us, I preached more doctrinally than usual, which I found made deeper and better impressions upon the minds of the awakened and unawakened, than loud and declamatory addresses to the passions. Strangers occasionally preached among us in such a manner, but with little effect. Discourses upon the divine character, the divine law, the total depravity of sinners, the sovereignty of special grace, and the immediate duty of submission, produced the most convictions, and the most conversions." The notion that a full exhibition of the great doctrines of the gospel has a tendency to prevent or check a revival of true religion, has been proved to be false, whenever the experiment has been fully and fairly made.

As to the tendency of Dr. Emmons' opinions to create divisions among a people, this is a fact only where they have already embraced dangerous and destructive errors. The truth in operation in the midst of error will indeed create divisions. But the only way to unite a people intelligently, firmly and permanently together, is to preach the truth to them so plainly and so frequently, that they cannot help understanding it. It is doubtless owing to the plain and faithful manner in which Dr. Emmons instructed his people in the self denying and unpopular doctrines of the gospel, that he so effectually guarded them from the encroachments of error, and kept them so generally and closely united. He has given the ministry one of the most important lessons which they have ever received upon the best manner of keeping their societies united.

The light which Dr. Emmons threw upon the doctrines of the gospel, served to establish the members of other churches, as well as his own, in the faith once delivered to the saints. In almost all the churches in which he was accustomed to preach, there were many who felt themselves peculiarly instructed by his luminous exhibitions of the truth; and some of them still cherish a grateful remembrance of the knowledge of Christianity derived from his preaching.

From the perusal of his writings also, many within and beyond the reach of his voice, have obtained a view of the gospel which has given them great strength and satisfaction. The following extract of a letter containing a liberal donation to the Massachusetts Missionary Society, of which he was then President, from a female in the State of New York, an entire stranger to him, is a specimen of a multitude of others which he received from those whose faces he never saw in the flesh. "I embrace the first opportunity of communicating my sincere thanks to you, as an instrument in the hands of God, of convin-

cing me of the truth, and establishing me in the belief of the doctrines contained in the Bible more than I ever was before, or probably should have been, had I never read your sermons." "So far as my ideas of divinity are correct, it is in a great measure, if not wholly, owing to the light which I have received from reading your sermons on doctrinal subjects, and of course I feel myself very much indebted to your labors and study." How much light has been diffused among the American churches, by the circulation of the single sermons and volumes which he published, and the communications which he made to various religious periodicals, it is impossible to form any definite estimate. But no one who is extensively acquainted with the religious views and feelings of professors of religion in New England, can doubt that his ministry has in some form or other exerted a great influence in forming them. Could all the knowledge of Christian doctrine which they have derived either directly or indirectly from his ministry, be now abstracted from these churches, their want of orthodoxy would be strikingly apparent. Those in the immediate vicinity of his labors would suffer an irreparable loss by such a process.

It was his object to produce salutary and permanent effects by his preaching and measures, rather than high and temporary excitement. He was fully aware of the fact, that in efforts to promote religion, as well as in secular concerns, a present good might be gained by the use of means which, in their ultimate results, would be evils more than sufficient to balance it. He guarded against the use of all such measures. And that he might be safe in his movements, he relied upon those means only which are obviously sanctioned by the word of God. Knowing that the word of God is the great instrument which he has appointed for the conversion of sinners, the sanctification of saints, and the prosperity of the church; he always laid himself out to make a clear, an appropriate and powerful exhibition of divine truth, and with a prayerful reliance upon the gift of the Holy Spirit, left the result of his efforts with God. When he could not accomplish a desired object without the use of means which were not of divine appointment, and evidently of a doubtful tendency as to their permanent influence; he felt that he ought to be willing to leave it for the present unaccomplished, and to direct his efforts to the attainment of others which the providence of God had placed within his reach. In this way he always retained his influence with his people, and set before his church an example of practical wisdom, which prepared the way for their permanent usefulness, as well as his own. During his ministry his church was not only large, but well disciplined and well instructed. Their in-

telligence, their example, and their united and well directed efforts in the cause of Christ, gave them an influence in the town, which was felt by every family and every individual in it. Though in his best days, there were among his people as well as every other, much sin and many overt acts of wickedness; yet it is well known that they were as a body, remarkable, not only for the depth and consistency of the piety which prevailed among them, but for their industry, honesty and sobriety, for their observance of the Sabbath, their domestic order and regularity, their attendance upon the public worship of God, and the respect which they paid to all the institutions of the gospel. The good influence of religion was felt, and continued to be felt, through the community over which Dr. Emmons presided as a spiritual watchman.

But perhaps one of the most important of all the effects of his ministry is the influence which he exerted upon ministers themselves. No less than eighty-seven young men studied theology under his direction, and enjoyed the advantages of his instruction and example in their preparation for the sacred office. That the influence which he exerted upon them was both powerful and salutary we have the most satisfactory evidence, both from their own testimony and from the high character as ministers of the gospel, which most of them subsequently sustained. One of them * says, "In the instruction of students in theology, of whom he had a large number, he excelled every teacher of whom I have ever had any knowledge, in any department of education, whether literary, scientific or professional." The young men who studied under his directions, obtained a more systematic and thorough knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel than was common among young ministers of their day. The sermons of many of them were distinguished for their logical arrangement, for their weight of matter, for the perspicuity of their style, and for the independent and fearless manner in which they announced the distinguishing truths of the Bible. These young men were generally devoted to their work, and in a very good degree successful in securing the great object of their high vocation. What an extensive and powerful influence did he exert upon the world through the medium of all these ministers, whose characters had been formed under the immediate influence of his instruction and example!

But those who were placed under his personal instruction were not the only ministers on whom he has exerted a great and salutary influence. Many with whose primary instruction

* Rev. Thomas Williams.

in theology he had nothing to do, have received important aid in their inquiries after truth from a personal acquaintance with him. Some, who in early life were in the providence of God placed under his ministry, or in circumstances in which they had frequent opportunities of hearing him preach, have acknowledged with gratitude the intellectual and moral influence which the matter and manner of his preaching had upon their minds. A still larger number who have had no personal acquaintance with him, and no opportunity to hear him preach, have received from his writings an intellectual and moral impulse, and a degree of light and satisfaction upon some of the more difficult points in theology, which they never could gain in an equal degree from any other source. Many who are not prepared to admit the truth of all his opinions, are as ready as others to acknowledge the peculiar benefit which they have derived from the perusal of his works. A distinguished clergyman, who fills a most important station among the churches of New England, has said, "Whatever I am worth as a minister of the gospel, I am indebted in no small degree to the writings of Dr. Emmons." This is a very honorable testimony to the Doctor's influence; especially when it is considered that it comes from a man who studied his profession at the oldest theological seminary in the country, and whose professional life has associated him intimately with some of the ablest scholars and divines of the age. The declaration just mentioned is nothing more than has been said in substance by many others. The writer has often heard ministers in different parts of the country acknowledge, with much apparent gratitude, the great advantage which they have derived from the perusal of Dr. Emmons' publications. The attention which he has paid to the doctrines of the gospel, and the success which has attended his efforts to illustrate and enforce them, has doubtless turned the attention of many others to the subject of doctrinal discussion, and encouraged them to engage in this too much neglected part of a minister's work. His example of industry in the sacred calling, has made many others feel both the duty and importance of giving themselves wholly to their work. The great amount of instruction contained in his sermons, and the perspicuous and interesting manner in which this was presented to his hearers, has no doubt determined many to carry none but beaten oil into the sanctuary. The definiteness and precision with which he treated every subject on which he wrote, has not only removed many difficulties from the minds of others respecting these subjects, but, at the same time, made them more accurate thinkers and writers. What he has taught respecting the nature of moral agency,

human depravity, and regeneration, has prepared the way for that more direct and apostolic mode of address, both to saints and sinners, which has been gaining ground for more than forty years among the ministers of New England. The palpable distinction which he made between saints and sinners, and which he presented before the public in so many forms, has doubtless exerted a powerful influence to make other ministers more discriminating in their preaching. Could the whole effect which his ministry has exerted upon ministers, and through them upon the churches and the world, be seen at one view, we should be prepared to acknowledge both the reality and importance of his success.

Dr. Emmons was eminently useful as a counsellor. His advice was sought by ministers and churches in almost every part of New England. Though in his day councils were much less frequent than at present, yet, in the course of his ministry, he was invited to one hundred and seven. Eighty-six of these councils he attended. Many of them were ordaining councils, and on these occasions he preached not less than twenty-six times.

There is another very important respect in which the effects of his ministry ought to be contemplated. He was a true friend and active promoter of Christian missions. Though he lived a retired life and was naturally inclined to mental rather than bodily exercise, yet he was, in his appropriate sphere, actively engaged in propagating the gospel among the destitute. His heart was much set upon this work. The reader of his autobiography will perceive, that he was inspired with the true spirit of missions from the very commencement of his spiritual life. After mentioning a time when he had a peculiar discovery of the Divine perfections, and the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, which filled his mind with a joy and peace to which he had ever before been a perfect stranger, he says: "This was followed by a peculiar spirit of benevolence to all my fellow men, whether friends or foes. And I was transported with the thought of the unspeakable blessedness of the day, when universal benevolence should prevail among all mankind." The intelligent reader will perceive here, not only the germ of his theology, but the spirit of missions; the very same spirit which moved Brainerd and Hall and Mills, and a host of others, to all their laborious and self denying exertions in behalf of the heathen.

He was one of the founders of the Massachusetts Missionary Society, and one of the leading and most efficient men in their primary operations. He was their first president and their first preacher, and the chairman of the committee who prepared their

first address to the public. He was one of the editors of the Massachusetts Missionary Magazine, a valuable periodical which was established for the purpose of promoting the great object of this society; and an able contributor to its pages. How much he did for the diffusion of the gospel and the salvation of men, by his connection with this society, cannot be ascertained until the disclosures of the great day. But no one, who is acquainted with the extensive and still increasing influence of this society, can doubt that the agency, by which it was formed and its early operations sustained, will yet be recognized as an important instrument in the conversion of the world. In the following extract from the last Report of this society may be seen not only a respectful tribute to the memory of Dr. Emmons, but an interesting view of its past operations, affording ground for the most cheering hopes of its future usefulness.

"'The venerable Dr. Emmons, one of the founders of the Massachusetts Missionary Society, who preached its first anniversary sermon, and presided over its affairs for the first twelve years of its existence, has been taken to his rest during the year now closing; and we doubt not has exchanged salutations with a great multitude, brought to heaven through the train of influences put in motion when he and his few associates awoke the spirit of missions in this ancient Commonwealth. In their first address to the public, drawn up by a committee of which he was chairman, forty-two years ago this present week, they express a strong presentiment that the Society 'will enjoy the divine benediction and be greatly instrumental in diffusing the greatest of all blessings, the salvation of sinners.' How far these suggestions of a lively faith have been realized, it may not be competent for us to decide. But in taking leave of one who stood as a connecting link between the present and 'ancient times,' it is cheering to reflect that this Society, from the day of its feeble beginning till the death of its first President, had dispensed the means of salvation in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Rhode Island; throughout all western New York, in parts of Pennsylvania and Tennessee, 'among the Wyandott Indians,' on the borders of Canada, 'in Nova Scotia,' and 'at New Orleans;' besides sustaining a hundred and sixty feeble churches in Massachusetts, and pouring into the treasury of the National Society many thousands of dollars to assist in carrying the gospel to every new settlement in the land."

There are good reasons for believing that the missionary spirit, which manifested and diffused itself by means of the Massachusetts Missionary Society, was one principal source whence sprang many other benevolent Associations. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions owes its origin as much, if not more, to this, than to any other known instrumentality. At the time the Board was formed, and many

years before, the Massachusetts Missionary Society was the most active and efficient missionary organization in the Commonwealth. The young men at Andover with whom the movement originated which led to the organization of the Board, were some of them the sons of men belonging to the Massachusetts Missionary Society, and may naturally be supposed to have imbibed the spirit with which their fathers were actuated. Previously to their efforts in behalf of foreign missions, these young men were known to be zealously engaged in promoting the object of the Massachusetts Missionary Society. They circulated the Address and Constitution of this Society, and made great exertions to procure signers to the Constitution and contributors to its funds. The writer received the Constitution and Address of this Society from the hand of one of these young men, with a request that he would circulate it as extensively as possible. He saw in other respects their attachment to this Society, and evidence that it had exerted, and was still exerting, an important influence upon their minds. The object contemplated by this Society was to evangelize the heathen, as well as to supply the destitute among those who were before acquainted with the gospel. Its operations had already directed the attention of the then rising generation in some measure to this great object. It prepared its own members, as well as others, for still farther and more important efforts for the conversion of the world. Dr. Worcester, the first Secretary of the A. B. C. F. M., had long been an active member and able Secretary of the Massachusetts Missionary Society. Jeremiah Evarts, Esq., whose influence as Treasurer and Secretary of the A. B. C. F. M. was felt through the world, was once the Treasurer of the M. M. S., and the Editor of their journal. The Missionary Herald, which is now the organ of the Board, and the principal medium of religious intelligence in this country, and a source of important information to the friends of missions among all nations, is a successor of the old M. M. Magazine. While we highly prize the more extended efforts which are now made for the conversion of the heathen, and honor the men who bear a prominent part in this great enterprise, we ought not to forget the important services rendered to this cause, by those who exercised the self denial and endured the labor of sustaining their feeble beginnings. It is impossible now to say, who will be found to have exerted the most important agency in erecting this glorious temple, the men who bear a part in elevating the top-stone to its place, or those who assisted in laying its foundation.

Dr. Emmons was made an Honorary Member of the A. B. C. F. M., by Hon. Samuel T. Armstrong, of Boston, Feb. 28, 1827, and he always considered it an honor and a privilege to

sustain this relation. He contributed to the funds of the Board, was deeply interested in the operations of this body, and devoutly rejoiced in their success. It ought not, however, to be concealed, that he was more engaged in Home than in Foreign Missions. He believed that American christians are under special obligations to give their own countrymen a knowledge of the gospel, and that this is the most important measure they can adopt for the conversion of the world. He did not desire that less should be done for the propagation of the gospel in foreign lands; but he insisted upon the duty of doing more comparatively for the conversion of our own countrymen. It was his decided opinion that the American church is farther behind her duty in respect to the supply of the spiritual wants of her own country, than she is in respect to the destitute of foreign lands. In reply to the assertions often made by those who conversed with him, that the more we do for foreign missions the more we shall do for our own country, he would often say, "The reverse of that is true; the more we do to sustain the gospel in our own country, the more we shall do for its dissemination abroad." He was a member of most of the benevolent Associations of the day. He was particularly interested in the operations of the American Home Missionary Society. As soon as he heard of its organization, he sent on thirty dollars to make himself a life member of that body, and he continued to contribute to its support as long as he lived. It will yet be seen, that he has not lived in vain in respect to the great cause of Christian missions.

The course which Dr. Emmons pursued is just that which many avoid because of its evident unpopularity. His sentiments and his practices were in many respects exceedingly unpopular. He buffeted a strong current all his days, both in the church and in the world. He was often obliged to make up his mind to say and do things which he knew would give offence, and bring down upon him not only the censures of many reputedly good men, but the indignation of the great body of the wicked. But after all, few men have been so highly honored in view of the world, as he. God turned their reproaches into blessings. They were led, in many instances, to admire and praise him for the very things which were once the objects of their dislike and condemnation. He lived to silence the murmurs of his enemies, and to stand before the world, an object of almost universal respect. Few men in their old age ever excited so much attention as he. Clergymen of all denominations, and gentlemen of every other profession, far and near, for some reason or other manifested a peculiar interest in him. Strangers of distinction called upon him, solicited

his acquaintance by letter, invited him to distant places at their own expense, and seemed to vie with his particular friends in efforts to promote his honor and happiness.

Within the circle of his acquaintance, his warmest opponents, both in politics and religion, became his friends and admirers. While they were careful to guard against committing themselves on the subject of his opinions, they would often express an unqualified approbation of his character; and seemed delighted with the honesty, decision and firmness, with which he had uniformly carried out his convictions. The esteem in which he was held was not the partiality of private friendship, or the interested feeling of any party attachment. Nor was it merely the homage which is sometimes paid to splendid talents, or mighty deeds. It was rather a deep conviction of personal worth; a feeling which arises spontaneously in view of strict, unbending integrity, maintained amidst all the vicissitudes and temptations of a long and laborious life. The profoundest homage that has ever been paid to the character of Dr. Emmons, has arisen, it is believed, in view of the courage and independence with which he has proclaimed his own convictions of truth, regardless of the frowns and flatteries of the world. From a sense of duty, he uniformly submitted to opposition and reproach. This trait of his character ultimately secured him a degree of respect, which could have been obtained by no other means. Nor is there any thing unnatural or mysterious in the fact. Human nature is such that it must pay homage, either voluntary or involuntary, to strict integrity of character. It will be seen by the following extract from an oration delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Brown University, September 4, 1832, by Hon. Theron Metcalf, Reporter of the decisions of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, that the trait of character named above was, among others, a particular object of his eulogy: "It might occur, one would think, to the discretion of all men, and especially to clerical men, that the only way in which lasting respect can ever be acquired, is in the pursuit of worthy ends by worthy means. Indeed, as a matter of immediate popularity, a clergyman would find his account in the bold and faithful discharge of his sacerdotal functions, without anxious regard to applause or censure. I need not refer to Massilon, and Oberlin, and other honored dead, in proof of this suggestion. But I cannot resist the impulse which inclines me to allude to an eminent living divine, personally known to many of you; whose plain and unshrinking enforcement of his own views of truth; whose fearless reprehension of wickedness in high places and in low; and whose entire devotion, for more than fifty years, to the duties of

his profession; have secured for him a most extensive and reverent respect, no less sincere and profound in the many who reject his peculiar opinions, than in the few who adopt them. I desire to be grateful, that in the place of my nativity, such an example of clerical dignity, fidelity, and contempt of the popularity 'which is run after,' was constantly before my youthful eyes; and that such an example of 'the popularity which follows' is still before the eyes of the public."

Few, indeed, seem to be aware of the fact, that the highest honor is destined to follow those who sacrifice their own interest, pleasure or popularity, in obedience to the calls of duty. Their own observation, however, might teach them that this is the order of divine providence, and present before them numerous examples by which it is strikingly illustrated. But if they saw no instances of its truth within the circle of their observation, they might derive a knowledge of the fact from the express testimony of the word of God. "They that honor me I will honor," is a declaration which corresponds in its language and import with many others. It ought to be better understood than it now is, that the only way to acquire true and permanent honor, even from men, is to secure the approbation of God; who can turn their hearts to whom he pleases, and make their affection and esteem the means of any amount of good which he may see fit to confer upon his friends. Let the movements of divine providence with respect to Dr. Emmons, impress upon the minds of Christian ministers the truth and importance of the Saviour's declaration: "If any man will serve me, him will my Father honor." Let them learn from his experience the perfect safety of preaching the truth out fully and plainly, however offensive it may be to the carnal heart. Let them be encouraged by this example before them, to reprove sin in all its forms, whether their rebukes fall upon the rich or poor, the high or low; or whether the present effects of their faithfulness be the approbation, or the frowns of the world.

CHAPTER VI.

HIS FAINTING IN THE PULPIT. — RESIGNATION OF HIS OFFICE. — SETTLEMENT OF HIS COLLEAGUES.

Dr. Emmons thought much upon the subject of old age. Long before he manifested any of its infirmities, he seemed to have made it a subject of familiar reflection and deep study. As his years increased, he wrote and preached a great many sermons upon old age, and often made it a topic of conversation with his friends. Finding himself in the enjoyment of good health at the age of sixty and seventy years, he doubtless had some anticipations that he might be spared far beyond the common limits of human life. He often expressed the dread which he felt of the infirmities and trials of old age. Sometimes he would say to his younger friends, "By and by I shall be thrown behind the door, and you have no idea what a dreadful thing it is to be laid aside as good for nothing." But there was one thing which he appeared more afraid of than any degree of suffering or neglect which he might endure from the infirmities of age. It was the continuance of his public labors beyond their usefulness. On the thirteenth of May, 1827, while delivering his sermon in the pulpit, he fainted. Those near the desk went immediately to his relief and carried him home. When he had recovered from his fainting turn, he was found to be very unwell, and continued so for several weeks. He did not, it is believed, immediately determine upon retiring then from his labors. But finding he did not recover his strength so soon and so fully as he hoped, he was inclined to regard this providential interruption of his labors as an intimation of the will of God that he should now retire from the active duties of his office. The result of his reflections on this subject, appears in the following communication:

"Franklin, May 28, 1827.

"TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH AND TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF THIS PLACE:

"Brethren and Friends, — I have sustained the pastoral relation to you for more than fifty years, which is a long ministerial life. The decays of nature, the increasing infirmities of old age, and my present feeble state of health, convince me that I must now retire from a field of labor which I am no longer able to occupy to my own satisfaction or your benefit. I therefore take the liberty to inform you that I can

no longer supply your pulpit, and perform any ministerial labors among you; and at the same time, that I renounce all claims upon any future ministerial support; relying entirely upon your wisdom and goodness to grant, or not to grant, any gratuity to your aged servant during the residue of his life.

NATHANAEL EMMONS."

This step was unexpected by his people. Except the increased lowness of his voice, in consequence of which some were unable to hear him distinctly, there was no perceptible failure in his public performances. As a general thing, he was as acceptable as a preacher, both at home and abroad, when he resigned his office, as he had been for years before. The step, which he now thought it his duty to take, deeply affected the people. Many were in tears; and some could hardly be reconciled to the thought, that they were never to hear him preach again. But as he was now in his eighty-third year, the more considerate of his people, however they might lament the change, could not but admit that the step was on the whole judicious. With unabated attachment to him as a man, with a grateful recollection of his past faithfulness, and under a deep sense of the loss which they now sustained, they yielded their consent to his wishes, and took measures for the supply of the pulpit which he had vacated.

There are two things in the manner in which Dr. Emmons retired from the duties of his station, which are characteristic of the man. The first is, his retiring at once before his failure was, to any extent, perceptible. He had noticed that old ministers generally hold on too long, and continue to officiate when their services have become unacceptable and useless. He determined, both for his own sake and that of his people, to avoid this mistake. He therefore took the first decisive indication of a weakness too great for his labors, to retire from his work. He did recover his health after this attack, and no doubt he always hoped he should. But he now felt that no reliance was to be placed upon his future strength, that at the longest it could continue but a short time, that he needed the remainder of his days for repose, and that he could probably do more good in his retirement than in the active duties of the ministry. But the greatest thing of all, which operated to deter him from resuming his labors, was the fear that he should continue them too long. To a gentleman who sometime afterwards congratulated him upon his green old age, and expressed a doubt whether he did not retire too soon from the ministry, he replied with his accustomed promptness, "I meant to retire while I had *sense* enough to do it."

The other thing in his manner of closing his labors, characteristic of the man, is the voluntary relinquishment of his salary. If any man ever had claims upon a people, he had upon his. His salary had always been small. And his labors had been unremitting for more than half a century. He was now between eighty and ninety years old, and his companion, although somewhat younger than he, was a cripple, and had been so for nearly ten years. If in these circumstances, he had insisted upon the people's doing something in a pecuniary way to smooth his passage to the grave, there could have been no just ground of complaint.

But although he knew they were his debtors, he was disposed to leave the question of future support entirely to their sense of justice and propriety. This was the same trust in God, and confidence in his people, which he had always manifested. He was never disposed to contend with his people on the subject of support; and least of all would he do this at a time so solemn and affecting both to him and them, as the closing up of his earthly labors. The parish voluntarily granted him an annual stipend of one hundred and fifty dollars during his life, and to this the church added fifty dollars a year from the avails of their fund.

No sooner had he relinquished the duties of his office than he appeared deeply solicitous to see a good man settled in his place. He evidently felt for his people the attachment of a father to his children. While they were destitute, there was no one object that seemed to occupy his attention, and interest his feelings so much, as the settlement of the right man as his successor. After being supplied by different individuals for the space of more than two years, the church and parish united in the choice of Rev. Elam Smalley as their pastor and teacher. With this choice Dr. Emmons was pleased. The day of Mr. Smalley's ordination, although attended with associations peculiarly solemn to this aged servant of God, was nevertheless one which he appeared to enjoy very highly. He rejoiced in the union which now prevailed among his flock; in the joy and satisfaction which they appeared to feel in view of their prospects; and in the hope which he himself indulged, that the transactions of that day would be the means of lasting good to the people in whose spiritual welfare he felt the liveliest interest. He was now in his eighty-fifth year. He had not opened his lips in the desk since the day he fainted in the delivery of his last sermon. A deep silence and a most intense interest pervaded the great assembly when he arose to give the charge to his colleague. In a low and tremulous voice, he thus began:

"Dear Sir, — More than fifty years ago, while standing near this memorable spot, I was consecrated to the Pastoral office over the church and religious society in this place, by my then fathers and brethren in the ministry, who have long since finished their course, and one after another gone the way of all the earth. A vivid recollection of those past scenes and events, awakens the most serious, the most painful and the most grateful reflections, anticipations, and emotions in my breast, on this affecting occasion. Though I have very frequently attended the usual solemnities of an ordination, yet this, in which I am now appointed to bear a part, is to me, in many respects, the most solemn and interesting one that I ever attended in the long course of my protracted life. I never read of but one man who was placed in a situation similar, or more striking and impressive than mine at this present moment; and I hope I do feel, in some measure, as Aaron felt when Moses, at the divine command, took him and Eleazar his son up to Mount Hor, in the sight of all the congregation of Israel on the day of his death; and there stripped off his sacerdotal robes, and put them upon Eleazar his son and successor in the most holy and sacred office on earth. This instance, dear Sir, is instructive to us both. It tells me that I must soon die, but it supposes that you may yet live many years; and in that case, admonishes you to fill my place properly, and supply my deficiences in the great work which I have for ever relinquished."

He entertained the council, with a great number of visiting clergymen, and other gentlemen who were present on this occasion, at his own house and at his own expense. After the religious exercises of the day were over, and he found opportunity to indulge himself in a social interview with the numerous friends who had convened on that occasion, he appeared in all the vivacity and cheerfulness of youth. There was a glow of health upon his cheek, his form was erect, his step was firm, and his movements were quick and regular. The excitement of the occasion served, no doubt, to bring all his powers both of body and mind into more vigorous action than usual. But it was remarked by a number who were present, at that time, that his mental activity, his social powers, and the zest with which he participated in the enjoyments of the day, were more than equal to what young men are accustomed to manifest on similar occasions.

His conduct toward his colleague was uniformly marked with paternal kindness and fidelity. The following testimony from Mr. Smalley himself, is gratifying evidence that the relation of colleague-pastor is not necessarily an unhappy one.

"It was not without trembling solicitude that I entered upon that intimate and solemn relation with him, in the year 1829. I had serious apprehensions that I should not be able to meet the demands of a

people who had enjoyed his services for more than half a century; and knowing what collisions of opinion and feeling had often arisen between colleagues of different temperaments and habits of thought, I greatly feared that it would be impossible for me, in preaching and pastoral deportment, to secure his approbation in any tolerable degree. But after an experience of more than nine years, I can truly say, that it is practicable for associate pastors of the same church to live in perfect harmony and peace, though differing greatly in age, in temperament, in style of communicating thought, and in many of the modes of pastoral supervision. From the first, he won my affection and confidence, and taught me to trust in him as a friend and father. He only asked that I would yield to him his place and rights, and most cheerfully he accorded to me all that I could reasonably desire. It was my privilege to seek his advice on all occasions of interest and solicitude; and it was his pleasure to select from his rich and varied experience those maxims of practical wisdom, and those opportune suggestions, which at once removed apparent difficulties and pointed out a path of light. In his criticisms on my public performances, he was uniformly kind and candid. The stated seasons in which I used to go and sit at his feet to listen to his timely and varied instructions; to suggest my doubts and difficulties; and have them removed by his pithy and sententious sayings, his luminous and ready statements; have a degree of sacredness in my mind, are among the most hallowed, the greenest spots on my memory of past years. With no mind have I been permitted to hold more intimate communion on the great truths of our holy religion than his; from no one have I ever received more unequivocal testimonials of disinterested friendship; and I seriously doubt whether the minister now lives, with whom I could spend nine years of such uninterrupted harmony and perfect good will, as I did when associated with him. Numerous and strong were my attachments to the church and people of Franklin; to break the ties that bound me to them was indeed painful; but it was long before I could feel willing to leave that father in Israel, with whom I had spent so many delightful and profitable hours. Yet, when at last I frankly told him my views and confidingly asked him what I should do, he touchingly replied, 'Though I had hoped to be spared this trial yet I do not see but you ought to go.' Now that he is dead, I mourn for him as a father; and yet I rejoice in the strong assurance that he is an inhabitant of that city which he was accustomed to speak of with glowing energy, and is holding communion with those sainted spirits which entered upon their reward before him."

The revival which took place under the ministry of his successor gave him great satisfaction. Though he could not attend many of the extra meetings, nor be frequently abroad among the subjects of the work, yet he did much at home by his counsel and prayers to aid others in carrying it forward. Many came to converse with him under serious impressions,

to whom he gave instruction in his usual appropriate and faithful manner.

In the removal of Mr. Smalley, he met with a trial which he did not anticipate. Having committed to him the oversight of his flock, and beheld with pleasure the attachment of the people to him, and his increased usefulness among them, he desired and expected to leave them under his ministry when he should take his departure from the world. But a righteous Providence had decreed that he should again behold his people as sheep without a shepherd. This event, although severely trying to his feelings, he met with a degree of candor and submission worthy of a man who had long contemplated the instability of all human affairs, and acquired the habit of putting his trust in God alone. The change gave a new exhibition to the strength of his attachment to his people, and the interest he felt in their welfare. He again united his efforts with those of his people to procure the re-settlement of the ministry among them. On the fifteenth of November, 1839, the church gave the Rev. Tertius D. Southworth an invitation to become their pastor. This step was in accordance with the wishes of Dr. Emmons. The parish subsequently concurred with the church in this invitation, and on the 23rd of January, 1839, Mr. Southworth was installed. Dr. Emmons was requested, on this occasion, to give the charge, but declined on account of his great age. Almost ten years had gone over his head since the ordination of his first colleague, and brought with them the debilitating influence of extreme old age. He was able, however, to attend the exercises of the occasion, and to enjoy in a good degree the visit which he then received from a large number of his clerical and other friends.

His connection with Mr. Southworth continued until his death, and like that with Mr. Smalley, proved to be one of uninterrupted harmony. Mr. Southworth was happily disappointed in the character of the man. "I had received," said he, "the impression that he was austere, and arrogant; and of course, the legitimate conclusion was, that he would be a most uncomfortable colleague. But at my first introduction to him, his complaisance, and the kind and affable reception which he offered me, at once dispelled my false and groundless impression, so contrary to his nature and dishonorable to his character. From that time to the present, there has been no occasion to alter my favorable opinion of him. He never manifested the least inclination to dictate to me in my course, leaving me entirely unshackled and free. But his counsel, he was ever ready to impart. This was always wise, disinterested and seasonable. Gratitude to his memory demands of me an

acknowledgment of many instances of advice peculiarly timely and very advantageous to me. As a counsellor he was to me inestimable. In this respect, I sensibly feel my need of him, and therefore sincerely and continually lament his death. He never gave me the slightest trouble by interfering with my arrangements. As he venerated the sacerdotal office, he always treated me with the greatest respect on account of it. He uniformly manifested towards me, the sincerest affection, kindness and friendship. During my connection with him, his conduct was such as to command my highest respect, my deepest veneration, my sincere and ardent love. I never saw the man, — my own reverend father excepted, — whom I so much revered and loved. In fine, Dr. Emmons was such an one as a modest, humble man, who is willing to be outshone by the brightness of a sun of almost unrivalled glory, would wish for a senior colleague. At the feet of such an one, it was delightful to sit and listen to the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, to the great things of God's law which he unfolded."

In every degree of prosperity which attended the church and society under the ministry of each of his successors, he heartily rejoiced. Nothing seemed to raise his spirits and to gladden his heart so much as to find that his colleagues were discharging the duties of their high vocation with ability and faithfulness, and in this way gaining the affections and confidence of their people. On the other hand, the least symptoms of disaffection toward their minister, or want of confidence in him among the people, gave him great uneasiness. From the time of his retirement from the duties of his office, he uniformly declined taking any part in the public services of the sanctuary, or even in any private, religious meeting. His principal reason for this was, his determination never to be in the way of his successor, or to impose his services upon the people after they had become tired of them. But, although he took no part in any public service and endeavored by every means in his power to turn the hearts of his people to his successor; he did not cease to cherish the same strong attachment to the people, and the same lively interest in their welfare, which he had felt before. After he had done preaching, he acted the part of a good church member, and a good parishioner. He was always ready to do his part to sustain the institutions of religion. He was always, as long as he had strength to get there, found in the house of God on the Sabbath. He always endeavored to encourage the heart, and to strengthen the hands of his minister. He always sought, as well as desired, the union, the peace, and the prosperity of his parish. In a sermon preached the Sabbath after his interment, Mr. Southworth thus notices

his attachment to his people. "His idol, if he had one, was his parish. It was the object of his greatest care, and tenderest solicitude. Even to his last days, he manifested the greatest concern for your welfare, watching for you with godly jealousy; often repeating, 'I do love Franklin,' and offering up for you some of his latest prayers."

CHAPTER VII.

HIS DOMESTIC CHARACTER. — DEATH OF HIS CHILDREN. — DEATH OF HIS SECOND WIFE. — HIS LAST MARRIAGE.

Dr. Emmons was ardently attached to his family. He was constitutionally a warm hearted and social man, and in spite of his deep speculations and studious habits, naturally became strongly attached to those friends with whom he was habitually and intimately associated. Of the strength of his attachments no one can doubt, who reads the record which he has made of his feelings when his first wife and children were taken from him. This early and sore bereavement probably did serve in some measure to moderate all his earthly attachments. It may have been designed to make him realize, more fully than before, the guilt and danger of loving the creature more than the Creator, or of depending upon any arm of flesh as the means of his support and happiness. It seems to have produced this important effect. In reference to this event of divine providence he says, "I learned some things which I shall never forget, and for which I shall have reason always to bless God. I learned to moderate my expectations from the world, and especially from the enjoyment of children and earthly friends. I have scarcely ever thought of my present wife and children without reflecting upon their mortality, and realizing the danger of being bereaved of them. And I have never indulged such high hopes concerning my present family, as I presumptuously indulged with respect to the family I have laid in the dust." He was not, however, less sincerely or truly attached to his last family than to the first. He was a kind husband and father, and a constant, faithful friend. Those who have resided in his family, and others who have occasionally visited there, know what cordiality prevailed in this domestic circle, and

what delightful intercourse was maintained among its members. But his attachment to his family bore the marks of sanctified affection. His love to them was evidently subordinate to his love of Christ. He always manifested a deep and lively interest in their welfare; but his interest in the cause of Christ was evidently greater than that which he took in any of his friends. It gave him great pleasure to gratify the wishes of his children. But they all knew that they could never be indulged in any thing which was contrary to the will of God.

Some who have formed their opinion of his character by looking at a few of the sternest features of his theology, have supposed that he must be cold, distant and unfeeling in his intercourse with his family and friends. But nothing is farther from the truth. He allowed his children to spend a little time with him every day in his study, when he would enter as fully as possible into their feelings; sometimes uniting with them in their childish sports, sometimes in conversing with them upon such topics as they chose to introduce, sometimes in telling them amusing anecdotes, and at others in discussing some more weighty and important topics. He always noticed what pleased them, took an interest in their companions, read their books, made remarks upon what they read, and gave them advice in regard to the best means of their improvement. He frequently made himself a companion for his children; and such was his familiarity with them, that they would go to him not only with their more important concerns, but frequently with the little affairs with which they amused themselves. If they were innocent amusements, they knew that he would enjoy them as well as they.

He never acted as an instructer to his children to any extent in their literary pursuits, but intrusted this principally to others. But to their religious instruction he paid particular and personal attention. It was his practice to take them alone, and converse with them freely upon their character and condition as sinners, and upon the necessity and obligation of their immediate repentance and acceptance of Christ. This he did with them all from their early childhood, until they arrived at adult years. He kept a watchful eye over all that resided in his house, and sought both their temporal and spiritual good. A number of those who have lived in his family, now acknowledge his faithful conversation with them in private as the means of their conversion. Others mention their preservation from destructive error as the effect of the same instrumentality.

The leisure which he enjoyed in his old age, rendered him in some respects more companionable than he was in the midst of the severe labors of his earlier years. He was more famil-

iar with his grand-children than he ever was with his children. And so companionable and interesting did he make himself to them, that they calculated as much upon seeing him as each other, and enjoyed his society as highly as they did that of their young associates. He insisted upon frequent visits from those who were near him, and with those who were at a distance, he sometimes corresponded. From one of these, the following extracts from several letters addressed to her, and her sister now deceased, have been received. They are thrown into his Memoir as specimens of the artlessness, good sense, and genuine affection, which this venerable patriarch was accustomed to manifest towards his descendants, when nearly ninety years of age. They are arranged in the order in which they were written, accompanied with a word of explanation by her to whom the greater part of them were addressed.

"The first letter I received from my dear grand-father, was in answer to one I wrote to him requesting some good advice; part of it I will copy:

"FRANKLIN, MARCH 17, 1830.

"I wish I were able to give you that good advice which you request me to give. But however, I will do as well as I can. In the first place I advise you to regard the advice, instructions, and even reproofs, of your dear mother and excellent grand-mother. They have a right to advise, instruct and admonish you; and you are under the most endearing obligations to regard their lessons of wisdom and piety. You have been devoted to God, whose you are and whom you are bound to serve in childhood, in youth, and through every period of your life and existence. Read the Bible every day, and make it your constant and infallible guide. 'Acknowledge God in all your ways, and he will direct your paths.' True piety spreads a brighter glory around all the native beauties and acquired accomplishments in the female character than gold, or pearls, or costly array. Dress neatly and elegantly, but not extravagantly and vainly. Form no intimacy with the unprincipled and vicious. Make as many friends as you can without flattery or deception; but make very few confidants. If any become your causeless enemies, forgive and watch them. Make no display of your talents or attainments; for every one will clearly see, admire, and acknowledge them, so long as you cover them with the beautiful vail of modesty. I wish to keep up our mutual correspondence. It may not be unprofitable to you, and it will certainly be amusing and gratifying to your aged, lonely, and almost forgotten grand-father.

N. EMMONS."

"FRANKLIN, MAY 5, 1830.

"My Dear ——: I am glad you are so able and ready to write to me. I am very fond of your letters and examine them very criti-

cally, and am highly gratified with every beauty and elegance. I discover in them * * *. If your grand-father and grand-mother, and your dear mother, have set you good examples, they lay you under very strong and endearing obligations to imitate their virtues and excellences.* The more careful you are to tread in their steps, the more you will please them while they live, and the more you will honor them after they are dead. So long as you follow good example you will set good example. O how much good you may do your dear, young, sprightly little sisters, if you take them by the hand and lead them in the paths of virtue and piety. You have all been devoted to God in one of his sacred ordinances, and frequently been carried to the throne of divine grace by those whose hearts have been bound up in you. Dear ——, if you could give it under your hand and seal, in sincerity and truth, that you daily read the Bible, and daily give your heart to God, and commit yourself wholly and for ever to his disposal, it would be a great consolation to your affectionate grand-father.

N. Emmons."

"The following was written after he had heard that I entertained a hope in Christ:

"Franklin, Feb. 5, 1832.

"My Dear ——: You are indeed my eldest grand-child, but it gives me greater joy to hope you are become a child of God. I will tell you that I have had peculiar and painful fears respecting your spiritual interests ever since you left us; for in one of the last times I conversed with you, I took notice of some expressions you let fall, which excited in my mind a strong suspicion that you were opposed to some of the most essential doctrines of the gospel, and leaning towards Unitarianism, or some other lax and dangerous errors. Under this impression, when I have daily carried all my grand-children to the throne of grace, I never failed to pray for you in particular. The moment, therefore, I read your letter, it darted into my mind that my particular petition for you had been graciously granted. But be that as it may, your account of your late views and exercises of heart, have given me great joy and consolation. If you have not mistaken and misrepresented the change you have experienced, I am ready to say that it looks like a genuine conversion. I wish however you would inform me how sudden your change was, and whether you were conscious of any extraordinary excitements of your natural passions, by any thing you heard or saw at the protracted meeting. * * * If you are a real subject of grace and follower of Christ, you may be exposed to great trials from your former graceless intimates. They will neglect no opportunities, and stick at no alluring motives, to draw you astray from the path of duty. * * * I hope you will write as soon as you receive this, and fully answer the queries of your affectionate grand-father.

Nathanael Emmons."

* "This was in allusion to something I had said, expressing veneration for the character of these friends."

"The two following he wrote to my dear sister Ellen; the first dated:

"Franklin, April 29, 1830.

"My Dear E——: I thank you for your short, pretty, pertinent letter, and I hope you will send me another very soon, and give me a more particular account of your Sabbath schools, Bible classes, the schools you attend, and the studies you are pursuing. Now is the best season you will ever enjoy to get that learning which may make you reputable, useful, and happy in years to come. You are growing up in an evil day, when you will be exposed to all the vanities and snares which surround childhood and youth. Remember your Creator, and he will guide and guard you every day and every where. You ask for advice, and I will give you a little. Give yourself more to thinking than to reading, for reading without thinking will make you vain rather than knowing. Your teachers may give you words and ideas, but they cannot give you knowledge. You can derive real knowledge from no other source than from your own mental exertions. Learn to think steadily, closely and acutely upon every subject to which your instructers direct your attention. Do you seek knowledge while others cull flowers, for flowers will fade but knowledge will endure. * * * Oh E—— if you and —— would only think how much pleasure your letters give me, you will not cease to write very frequently to your solitary grand-father.

N. Emmons."

"Franklin, June 27, 1832.

"My Dear E——: I have long entertained the pleasing hope that you had become truly a child of God, and stood entitled to his gracious promise to pious youth: 'I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.' This fond hope I am loath to give up, though the description which you have given of yourself, in your late letter, seems designed to weaken or destroy it. It is true, a false hope had better be given up than indulged. But it is very possible to give up a good hope, and young converts have often been led to give up such a hope. The reason is, they hope for too much at first. They are ready to imagine that they shall continue to enjoy their warm feelings and bright prospects, without any interruption or diminution. This they have no right to expect; for God has never promised to give them the constant light of his countenance and manifestation of his love. He often hides his face from them and plunges them in darkness and doubts, to try their faith, and the sincerity of their submission to his amiable and awful sovereignty. I want to know, therefore, why you have given up your hopes. If it is because you have lost a sense of danger, or a realizing sense of the divine presence, and of the great realities of the invisible world, your hopes may revive again; but if it be because you still love the world supremely, and cannot bear to take up the cross and to walk in the strait and narrow path to heaven, you ought to give up your hope, and immediately repent and give God the supreme affection of your heart."

Dr. Emmons could say with Jeremiah, "I am the man that hath seen afflictions." The reader of his Autobiography has become familiar with the facts relative to the sickness and death of all the members of his first family, and the peculiar trials which he endured during the war of the Revolution. A long period of domestic comfort, with peace and prosperity in his church and parish, succeeded. But at length the destroyer returned. With the exception of three children, who had settled abroad, all his family were again laid in the dust; while he lived to endure the anguish of these painful separations, and the dreary solitude which followed. On the third day of June, 1813, his second daughter, Deliverance, died. The circumstances of her sickness and death were intensely interesting. A few of these, with the feelings of the afflicted father under them, may be gathered from the following remarks written by a sister, who was an eye witness of the whole scene.

"In the sickness and death of this beloved daughter, my father was deeply affected. She had reached mature years without having given her heart to the Saviour. We never felt that our father had any favorites among his children, but that we all shared alike his paternal care and affection. Still it was evident that in his opinion this daughter partook very largely of his peculiar traits of character. He used sometimes to say, pleasantly, "She is the only child I have that has the misfortune to resemble me." But to those who knew her best, it was evident that this resemblance was not in person or feature, but in the cast of her mind. She was distinguished for her wit, vivacity and discrimination. In the exercise of her social powers she was the delight not only of her youthful associates, but of her friends of every age. Her sickness was a scrofula consumption, long and distressing, continuing more than three years and a half. In the summer of each successive year her symptoms were less violent and would invite the hope of her restoration. But the return of winter would again confine her to her room, and nip those hopes which were so fondly cherished. All this while, my father 'at the dreadful post of observation' was, in his own way, endeavoring to lead her to the Saviour. He conversed with and prayed for her. He put such books into her hands as he thought best suited to bring her mind to a decision. In the early part of the time he uniformly conversed with her alone, that she might disclose her feelings without embarrassment. During the latter part of her sickness the members of the family were present, and other Christian friends visiting us were invited to converse with her upon the subject of her spiritual state. For some time previous to her death the enmity of her heart appeared to be slain; but light had not broken into her mind with sufficient clearness to allow her to indulge a hope of her acceptance with Christ. Never will a remark be forgotten made by her to an affectionate sister, who communicated to her her own change of views and hope in the Saviour. 'How is it that I rejoice that you are

taken while I am left? But I do.' She well knew that such joy in the sovereignty of God was not the feeling of the natural heart, yet she felt that she could indulge no such hope herself. 'If I were a christian,' she would say, 'I should feel more deeply my sins. I know I am a sinner, but do not feel it.' Shortly after this, the Saviour was pleased to manifest himself to her in a most delightful manner. Her views seemed clear and rapturous. When questioned by her father with regard to these exercises, and asked why she might not now be deceived, as Satan could transform himself into an angel of light; she promptly replied, 'Because I think my views and feelings are perfectly scriptural.' Ever after this, her mind remained in the most delightful and tranquil state. For several days the lamp of life burned dimly, and we were in constant expectation of her departure. When we were called in the night to enter her dying room, her countenance was lighted with a smile, and she continued to converse with her brothers and sisters in the most affectionate and interesting manner. Her parents stood with us around her dying bed. Their calmness and composure was manifest in this hour of trial; and as the sun was rising upon this dark world, her spirit fled as we trust to the abodes of light and glory. During the whole of this period my father was calm and collected; yet it was evident he felt it most deeply. When questioned with respect to this bereavement, in comparison with that he suffered in the removal of his two other children, he replied, 'There is a different train of reflections. In the death of an adult child, the *loss* is more deeply felt, but in the death of little children, the tender feelings are more powerfully called into exercise.' One of the means made use of to keep himself from being overcome in this day of trial was, that he followed in contemplation the departed spirit. This may be inferred from the advice given to one of his children who was at this time disposed to linger around 'the beautiful clay,' and continue by its side. 'Beware, beware,' said he, 'of nursing your grief at the body; follow the soul, and you never need fear being overcome.' This was found to be of great practical importance to the one to whom it was addressed. That my dear father was most deeply affected by this dispensation was evident from the fact, that when alone in his room, he was often heard to repeat the following lines, which he afterwards placed upon her grave-stone. They are, with slight alterations, taken from Henry Kirke White.

"When o'er thy dawn the darkness spread,
And deeper every moment grew;
When rudely round thy painful head
The chilling blasts of sickness blew;
Religion heard no plainings loud;
The sigh in silence stole from thee;
Thy dearest friends around thee crowd,
With hearts of deepest sympathy."

"This marble marks thy bed of mortal sleep,
And living statues here are seen to weep;
Affliction's semblance bends not o'er thy tomb,
Affliction's self deplores thy early doom."

In March 13, 1820, Dr. Emmons was placed in more trying circumstances than in the death of his daughter. His son Erastus, whom he had invited to settle with him at home, and who was on many accounts peculiarly fitted "to rock the cradle of his declining years," was then taken from him. This young man possessed a noble disposition, great buoyancy of spirit, and a talent for doing business with order, neatness, and despatch. He had repeated offers from his acquaintances of an opportunity to go into trade with them; which were apparently far more advantageous to him, in a pecuniary view, than any which could be made him at home. But from a regard to the feelings of his aged parents, and a desire to look after them when they should be unable to take care of themselves, he was induced to decline these offers, and to remain under the paternal roof. His decision on this subject was a high gratification to all his friends; and if there was any arm of flesh on which Dr. Emmons now leaned, it was the disposition and ability of this beloved son to render his last days comfortable and happy. But this frail support was soon removed. While on Boston Common, in the discharge of his duty as aid to Major General Crane, on a cold autumnal day, he received a heavy chill which fastened disease upon his lungs. From the first of this attack, Death seemed to mark him as his victim; and, with one short interval of relief and encouragement, his course was onward, with rapid strides, to the grave. His father now distinctly saw the heavy calamity that was before him, the irreparable loss which he was about to sustain. But the thought of being deprived of the society and support of one on whom perhaps he had placed too much dependence, was not the greatest subject of his anxiety. This dear object of his affections and hope, had given him no evidence of a preparation for death. The thought of his leaving the world without a good hope of salvation, filled him with the deepest solicitude. By his counsel and his prayers, he endeavored to lead him to a saving knowledge of Christ. His efforts were apparently attended with success. For some time this son suffered great anxiety and distress of mind in view of his situation; but at length, as it was hoped, submitted himself to God, and found peace in believing. For a number of weeks previous to his death, he enjoyed great consolation; and gave as much evidence of a change of heart as could be expected from one converted upon a dying bed. From his appearance near the close of life, the anxiety of his father respecting him was evidently greatly relieved. Though always distrustful of the saving nature of a change which takes place just as the day of probation is expiring, yet from an expression which he dropped in the ear of his dying son, he evidently cher-

ished a hope of his salvation. Just before he left the world he looked up and said, "Father, I am dying." His father then, in allusion to what he had previously heard him say respecting his submission to God and hope in his mercy, inquired if his trust and confidence in God remained unshaken. He replied in the affirmative. Then said his father, "Your passage is short, and, if you are not deceived, your rest in heaven will be glorious." The son expired. Shortly after, the father offered a prayer, in the room where lay the remains of his departed son, apparently full of submission and trust in God. So perfect was his composure, that once only was his utterance choked by the depth of his emotions. God evidently granted him peculiar consolation in this trying hour. And now there is no mystery in the extraordinary support and consolation which he then enjoyed; for it has since been ascertained that a number of his church, anticipating the fearful result of his son's sickness, had met weekly to unite their prayers that he might be sustained under the approaching calamity.

Within less than three years of the death of this son, his daughter Sarah, who had taken the principal care of him, and whose strength had often been exhausted by her unremitting attention to his wants, began to decline. She was now the only child that remained with her parents at home. Her presence and aid in the family seemed peculiarly desirable, previously to the death of her brother, but afterwards indispensable. When her health first began to fail, strong hopes were entertained that she might be restored. Some who knew the circumstances of her aged parents, and had sympathized with them in the trying scenes through which they had passed, could hardly believe that God would bereave them of all their children, and leave them as it were alone, in their declining years. But his ways were not their ways, nor his thoughts their thoughts. Though every means within the reach of her friends was used for the removal of her disease, it still continued, and gained strength, until it put a period to her valuable life. In this instance, Dr. Emmons was called to endure again, essentially, the same affliction which was brought upon him by the death of his son. This daughter, like him, was amiable and judicious, and peculiarly useful. Her devotion to the welfare of her parents, and the skill with which she managed the concerns of the family, were truly remarkable. The loss which they must sustain in her untimely removal, seemed irreparable. But alas! this was not their greatest trial even in her case. They were obliged to see her, as they had seen their two other children before her, descending to the grave without the consolation of hope. Their hearts were again wrung with anguish. Again

they endeavored to lead a graceless child to Christ. Again they sought the Lord in behalf of one who was soon to leave the world. And again the Lord heard their prayers. From the following extract of a letter, in which her father announces her death to a distant relative, it will be seen that he mourned not as those who have no hope. "I believe that she had but very little expectation of living for more than six months before she died. All that time her mind was seriously impressed; but she did not entertain a hope of having right views and feelings till about two months before she left the world. Ever after she first found light, she continued to enjoy it, which gave her great peace and tranquillity of mind as long as she lived. She conversed very freely about the state of her mind, and of her prospects beyond the grave. She seemed to regret leaving the world, principally on account of her aged parents. But the wise and holy Disposer of all things has been disposed to deny the gratification of her desires and ours. She is gone and we are left to lament her loss." When his other daughter died, he had five children left, and four of them were in his own family. When his son died, although the staff on which he leaned was taken away, he still had one child whose presence prevented in some degree his sense of loneliness, and whose filial regard and attentions greatly alleviated the pains of his bereavement. But when this daughter died, he and his feeble companion were left alone, without a child at home to participate in their grief, or to lighten the burden of their cares.

The good providence of God preserved his wife for several years after the death of his daughter. But on the second day of August, 1829, this relict of his family was taken away. This was a solemn and trying day to him. It not only separated him from a companion whom he tenderly loved, and highly esteemed, and who had been a partaker of his joys and sorrows for almost fifty years; but deprived him of the aid which her kind attention and care had so long afforded him. Though feeble in health, and for many years unable to walk except with the assistance of crutches, yet such were her habits of industry and care, so well did she "look to the ways of her household," that she was felt to be peculiarly useful to the very close of her life. Dr. Emmons knew and appreciated her worth. He often said, in reference to the almost mysterious manner in which his temporal wants had been supplied, "My wife has supported me." When he saw her descending to the grave, he felt that a day of calamity had come. The following letter to her brother, John Hopkins, Esq., of Northampton, will show both his estimation of her character, and the depth of the affliction which he suffered.

"FRANKLIN, AUG. 6, 1829.

"Dear Brother: The last Sabbath, about four o'clock in the morning, Mrs. Emmons exchanged that day of rest, I hope and believe, for 'that rest which remaineth to the people of God.' Your loss is great, but mine is irreparable. I am emphatically a pilgrim and stranger on the earth, having neither father nor mother, nor brother nor sister, nor uncle nor aunt living. I am left alone to bear the heaviest affliction I have ever been called to bear, in an evil time. Though I enjoy usual health, yet the decays of nature and the infirmities of old age render me less able to bear troubles and sorrows than I was in former days, when I was called to suffer breach after breach in my family; therefore this last and widest breach seems destined to bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to my grave. I sympathize with you, and I know you will sympathize with me. You knew the excellent character of your sister, but I knew more of her excellence, worth, and importance to me. She was indeed a rich blessing to me, and to her family, and to her people, among whom I believe she never had a single enemy. She was eminently a pattern of patience, meekness, and submission during a long life of peculiar trials, bodily infirmities, pains and distresses. She was — but I forbear. Her health was visibly declining through the Winter and Spring, but we did not view her immediately dangerous until the Tuesday before she died. She was apparently struck with death Saturday evening, but did not expire till morning. She retained her senses to the last, and left the world, not in triumph, but in that hope which was an anchor to her soul, both sure and steadfast. You and Mrs. Hopkins will, I hope, in your best moments remember your aged and bereaved brother.

NATH'L EMMONS."

Under this bereavement, however, he was calm, collected and submissive; an object of admiration to such as beheld the composure with which he sustained the shock, and of deep and compassionate interest, to all who considered his great age and lonely condition. He was now in his eighty-fifth year. His surviving children were all settled abroad. Those whom he had expected would continue with him, and be his solace and support in his declining years, were now all in the grave. He had no connections in his family, or in the town, but an aged sister of his late wife, to beguile his hours of solitude, or extend to him the attention and care which at this age he evidently needed. Though an event of divine providence not long after occurred, which brought back his eldest daughter to the paternal roof; yet it was an event which in some measure aggravated his trials. It was the sudden death of her amiable and worthy husband, WILLARD GAY, Esq. of Dedham, to whom he was warmly attached, and whose occasional visits and kind attentions he highly appreciated. This affecting event occur-

ing at a time when her health was feeble, proved too much for her delicate constitution. Both body and mind seemed to sink under the overwhelming pressure; and for a time, it was doubtful whether either would recover from the shock. Though a kind providence did preserve her, and eventually restore her health and spirits, yet it will at once be seen that her circumstances then must have been peculiarly trying to her aged father, meeting him as they did in the midst of his own heavy afflictions. But in all these trials he was not only composed and submissive, but uniformly cheerful and apparently happy. He was accustomed to notice the hand of God in all the events of his life, and appeared to rejoice in his goodness in the day of adversity, as well as in the day of prosperity.

On the eighteenth day of September, 1831, he was married to Mrs. Abigail M. Mills, the widow of the late Rev. Edmund Mills, of Sutton. This lady now survives him. To the care with which she watched over him, as the infirmities of age continued to multiply, and to the constancy and kindness with which she attended to all his wants, was he much indebted for the quietness and comfort of his last days.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS VISIT TO NEW YORK.—GRADUAL DECLINE.—SICKNESS AND DEATH.

Dr. Emmons always loved home. The retirement and quietness of his own dwelling were more congenial to his studious disposition and habits, than any scenes abroad that are attended with the noise and confusion of the multitude. As he advanced in life, his indisposition to go from home evidently increased; after he retired from the active duties of his office, he had much time at his own disposal, and his health was sufficiently firm and vigorous to enable him to perform a journey of almost any length, without injury. But social as was his disposition, and much as he enjoyed the society of his friends, he still preferred his study and his books to the enjoyments of the most inviting scenes abroad. He did, however, at the earnest solicitation of his friends, make a number of journeys, of considerable length, after he was ninety years old. In the

spring of 1835, he received a very polite invitation from Messrs. George Douglas, and Edward A. Russell, of the city of New York, then entire strangers to him, to visit the city at the time of the anniversaries, and to make their houses his home. These gentlemen having read his works with great satisfaction, and heard much of him from the lips of his friends, were exceedingly desirous of seeing him, and paying him the personal respect which they felt for his character and works. They accordingly wrote him a joint letter, inviting him, with such of his friends as he might wish to have accompany him, to visit the city, the week previous to the anniversaries, and to remain with them as long as he could make it convenient and pleasant to stay. At first, he seemed to have no idea that he could go so far from home; and said, humorously, that the thought of it proved that he was so far superannuated as to need to be taken care of. But after receiving the advice of his friends on the subject, he concluded to go; and returned an affirmative answer to the invitation which he had received. Messrs. Douglas and Russell immediately sent him another letter, in which they expressed their high satisfaction at his acceptance of their offer, and enclosed one hundred dollars which they begged him to accept, as the means of relieving him from the expenses of his intended journey. On his arrival at New York, the gentlemen who had solicited the favor of his visit to the city, were waiting for him upon the wharf. After an introduction to them, he was conducted to the house of Mr. Douglas, which he made his home for several days, and then removed to Mr. Russell's. At each of these places, he was treated with marked attention and respect. The above named gentlemen and their families spared no pains or expense to render his visit to the city pleasant to him, and to those who accompanied him. They were taken to the different parts of the city, and shown the various objects of interest and curiosity which this great emporium presents to the stranger. They were introduced to many individuals and families of distinction; and wherever they went, it was gratifying to perceive with what cordiality and respect this aged divine was received. His great age, his extraordinary activity both of body and mind, and especially the antiquated form of his costume, would naturally excite the attention and curiosity of the multitude. But among the more intelligent, especially of the friends of religious truth, it was apparent that his eminence as a divine, was the great source both of the curiosity and respect with which he was every where beheld.

He attended the meetings of most of the benevolent societies which were held in the day time, and appeared to enjoy these exercises highly. He was earnestly solicited to take

some part in the exercises at these public meetings, but always declined on account of his age, except in a single instance. He did consent to act as President *pro tem.* at the business meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society. He was influenced in this case to deviate from his purpose, formed many years before, never again to appear before the public, on the ground that the circumstances in which he was then placed would speak an important language. He was himself a decided abolitionist. The flame of liberty which was kindled in our Revolutionary struggle, and increased by all the efforts, in which he bore a part, to establish and maintain our Federal government; still burned with fervency in his aged breast. In the great city which he now visited for the first time in his life, and which he had no expectation of ever seeing again, he knew the sacred cause of freedom had recently been assailed by a lawless mob; and its comparatively few friends were now struggling not only with the deadly hostility of slaveholders, but with the influence of that unnatural sympathy and countenance given to their oppression by many professed friends of liberty. It was interesting to see the workings of his noble and patriotic mind, when he received the invitation to attend this Anti-Slavery meeting. Some of his friends who were present, advised him to accept, and others to decline the invitation. He heard them both with candor and kindness, but made no decisive reply until one of the party said to him, "This may be the last public act of your life." He then immediately arose and said, "I must go."

He found in the city many of his former acquaintances, both of ministers and laymen, the meeting of whom gave him great pleasure; and there he had opportunity to see and converse with many of his own profession from abroad, who were known to him only by report, and who but for this interview must have been personal strangers through life. Fears were entertained by his friends, that the exciting circumstances in which he was there placed might prove too much for his strength. But in the midst of them all he appeared to be well, cheerful, and happy. And he actually returned home in as good health and spirits as any of his friends who attended him. He often spoke of his visit to New York with great apparent interest and satisfaction; and never did he forget the peculiar kindness, respect, and attention which he received from those with whom this movement originated.

This visit so far from injuring him, evidently did him good. He had afterwards more courage than before to venture from home, and several times yielded to the solicitations of his friends at a distance to visit them. Some time in 1837, when ninety-two years old, at the urgent solicitation of his son, Hon. William

Emmons, he was influenced to embark on board the steam-boat for Hallowell, Maine. On their passage to this place, he and his wife were accompanied by one of their grand-children. On their return they were attended by one whom his son requested to accompany them to Boston. He reached home in good health and spirits, observing in his pleasant way, that he might yet cross the Atlantic and make the tour of Europe. In April 25, 1838, he attended the ordination of Rev. Abijah R. Baker, at Medford, and during his absence visited Salem, Boston, Dorchester and other places.

During the last four or five years of his life, it was perceived that he was going down very gradually. His memory grew more treacherous. His bodily strength gradually failed; and although he continued to enjoy, as a general thing, a remarkable flow of spirits, yet there were short intervals when there appeared to be a suspension of his usual vivacity. A portion of the day he would appear to be heavy, and sometimes remain for hours in a gentle slumber. At other times he would be wakeful, lively, and as bright as in the days of his youth. Even until the period when he became unable to speak, there were times when his judgment appeared as sound, his wit as ready and as keen, and his conversation as full of practical wisdom and good sense, as at any former period of his life.

He spent his time principally in reading, until he became too weak to endure this exercise. At the age of ninety-one and two, it is believed that he read as much as most ministers do in the meridian of life. Though he could not remember what he read a great while, yet he appeared to understand it as well, and to enjoy it as highly as ever; and it afforded him fresh topics of interesting conversation with his friends from day to day. At this period he not only made himself acquainted with the leading periodicals of the day, but encountered many a massy volume. When he became unable to read himself, he would hear reading from others. There was the space of years near the close of his life, when he would read a part of the time himself, and listen to others, as he had opportunity, the rest. The last year before his death he seldom attempted to read, but would often listen for hours to any of the family who could read to him. When visited by his grand-children, in his latter days, he would frequently spend a part of the time in amusing and instructive conversation with them, and then request them to read or sing to him.

For years he lived in constant expectation of death. He "so numbered his days as to apply his heart unto wisdom." While in the enjoyment of good health, and with nothing unusual to remind him of his approaching dissolution, the fact

that he was an old man, that death stood at the door, and that he was about to give up his account to God, was the subject of his constant thought and frequent conversation. To his younger brethren in the ministry who occasionally visited him, he would often say, "I am about to die, but you will live. You must be faithful, and do a great deal of good in the world." To a friend who called upon him about two years before his death, he expressed himself substantially in the following manner. "It is a great thing to die. The thought of it is very solemn and almost overwhelming. I have now a great deal of time to think, and I do constantly think of the change that is before me. I sit here and think of the disembodied spirit, the nature of that change which the soul undergoes at death, and the condition of those who have entered the eternal world."

In conversation with a connection of his family, respecting his great age and the probability of his speedy departure, he once said, "I want to go to heaven. It is an inexpressibly glorious place. The more I think of it, the more delightful it appears." After alluding to the developement of God's perfections in heaven, and expressing his desire to behold this exhibition of divine glory, he added, "And I want to see *who* is there; I want to see brother Sanford, and brother Niles, and brother Spring, and Dr. Hopkins, and Dr. West, and a great many other ministers with whom I have been associated in this world, but who have gone before me. I believe I shall meet them in heaven, and it seems to me our meeting there must be peculiarly interesting." He then added, "I want to see too the old prophets and the apostles. What a society there will be in heaven! There we shall see such men as Moses, and Isaiah, and Elijah, and Daniel, and Paul. I want to see *Paul* more than any other man I can think of." At this time his mind seemed to be filled with anticipations of heaven. He dwelt upon it with intense interest, and said much of its glory and blessedness. In connection with what he said on this occasion about heaven, he expressed more fully than was usual for him, his feelings respecting the gospel. With great apparent emotion he said, "I do *love* the gospel. It appears to me more and more wonderful and glorious every day. I think I now understand something about the gospel; but I expect, if I ever get to heaven, to understand a great deal more." The question in some form or other, was suggested, Whether he was certain of obtaining salvation? He replied, "I cannot say, I am *certain* that I shall be saved; but I have no doubt on the subject." He then added, "I have an assurance of *faith*. I can say, I do *know* that the doctrines which I have preached are true. And I can almost say, I have an assurance of *hope*.

I have no doubt that, through Jesus Christ, I shall be saved." He often spoke of Christ as the only foundation of his hope, and the satisfaction which he felt at the thought of being saved through him alone.

Though a stranger might suppose from the cheerfulness and pleasantry of his conversation with those who occasionally called upon him, that he thought but little of death; yet so constantly was this great subject before him, that he seldom let an interview with a particular friend pass without introducing it. Every attack of disease, although but slight, he would take as an intimation that the time of his departure drew nigh. He literally looked and waited for the coming of his Lord. He often expressed surprise that God spared him so long; and although he uniformly appeared to be patient with the continuance of life, and often expressed his conviction that long life was a blessing; yet there were times when he evidently desired to depart. Some time before his last sickness, he was suddenly taken severely ill, and fears were entertained by his friends that he would not recover. While one of them was conversing with him in the evening, he said, "I hope I shall be permitted to go, if it may be the will of God, before morning." But during the night he revived, and in the morning was much better. He said to the same individual, "I am sensibly relieved, and I may be spared some time longer, but I cannot help feeling disappointed."

In his last sickness he was able to say but little. About the time when it was apparent that he could not recover, his throat began to fill up to such a degree that he could not distinctly articulate. Though he appeared for the greater part of the time to have his reason perfectly, yet it was seldom that he said any thing which could be understood. Several times he seemed very desirous of communicating something to those who stood by him, and made a great effort so to speak that they might understand. But it was only now and then that his meaning could be ascertained. A few hours before he died, he turned his eyes upon one who sat by his bed, and addressed him with great earnestness for some time. But no one present could get the meaning of a word. It was peculiarly painful to see a dying man striving in vain to make himself understood, and no small disappointment to his friends not to know what he would say in his departing moments. But he had left nothing to be done in a dying hour. He had given his friends and the world entire satisfaction in regard to his own preparation for heaven. And the instruction which he was able to impart for their benefit, he had taken a more favorable opportunity to give. They had repeatedly heard from his

lips when in health, all, and more than all, which any man could impart in death.

It is gratifying, however, to know that up to the time when the power of speech was taken away, his conversation was such as to indicate an apprehension of the change that was before him, and a readiness to meet it. He was asked if he expected to recover, and he answered "No." He was asked if he had any fear of death. His answer was, "I cannot say that I have no dread of the passage through the dark valley; but I am not afraid of what is beyond." "Your hope then sustains you in this trying hour," replied his friend. "O yes," said he, "I believe that I shall be accepted. I shall be greatly disappointed if I am not." He was asked if he was desirous "to depart and be with Christ." His answer seemed to indicate some remains of an instinctive dread of the agonies of death, while it showed that his heart was in heaven. "I do n't wish," said he, "to die to-day, nor to-morrow; but the thought that I shall soon be gone gives me pleasure." He always had a very great dread of pain, or bodily suffering. It was his desire, if it might be the will of God, to die an easy death. And during his sickness he frequently expressed his gratitude to God that he went down so gently, and his hope that his removal might be without a severe struggle. But it was the will of God that he should taste the bitterness of death. During the night previous to his departure, while he was supposed to be dying, his distress for breath was frequently very great. Just before the closing scene, however, he was comparatively easy; and when he actually left the world, it was with so little alteration in his appearance that no one in the room could tell when he ceased to breathe.

On Wednesday, the twenty-third of September, 1840, about three o'clock in the morning, his spirit took its upward flight. Though this event had been for some time daily expected, yet when it came it produced a sensation which could not be anticipated. Every one felt that a great and good man had fallen, that a valuable friend had been taken away, and that the community had sustained an irreparable loss. "The glory is departed" was written upon the walls of his house, and desolation marked the place of his former residence. His funeral solemnities took place on the Monday following. The Rev. Thomas Williams, who had been requested twenty-two years before, to preach on this occasion, delivered a very able and appropriate sermon* from Ecclesiastes, xii. 9. "And moreover, because the

* This sermon, which it was proposed to publish with the works of Dr. Emmons, is omitted at the request of the author.

preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge." From this signally pertinent text, the following general truth was deduced, and fully illustrated and sustained: "A wise preacher will constantly teach his people knowledge." Mr. Williams gave the deceased an exalted character, ranking him first among the most distinguished divines of New England. Prayer was offered at the house by Rev. Mr. Long of Milford, and at the meeting-house by Rev. Mr. Fisk of Wrentham, and Dr. Codman of Dorchester. The following original ode, prepared for the occasion, was sung at the grave.

"Rest, man of God! thy labors cease,
And we, thy sorrowing children, come
To lay thee in the grave in peace,
And sing around thy hallowed tomb.

"With all the great and holy dead
Long since departed to the skies,
Triumphant from this lowly bed,
In equal glory thou shalt rise.

"Thou wert our father, friend, and guide,
Our faithful shepherd, tried and true;
For all, for whom the Saviour died,
Thy life a deathless pattern drew.

"Though thou dost sleep, thy page shall burn
With untold lustre, ages hence;
Millennial converts yet shall learn
The doctrines of the Cross from thence.

"Well nigh a century was spent,
Amid life's ever varying scenes;
Ah! thou didst know what Sorrow meant,
Oft drinking from her bitter streams.

"But lo! thy ransomed soul is gone;
Gone to thy Saviour and thy King;
Already hast thou learned the song
Which angels never, never sing.

"And now, while 'dust to dust is given,'
And farewell sighs are heard from all,
On him, who points our way to heaven,
May thy descending mantle fall."

The vast concourse of people assembled on this occasion, and the deep feeling which was indicated by their countenances and deportment, very strikingly evinced the sincere affection and respect in which this aged divine was held. There was about fifty ministers present, and many laymen of distinction from a distance. Though he had lived to an age at which most people are forgotten by the community, and at which the young cease to feel any interest in them; yet he seems to have

retained not only the profound respect, but the warm affection of even the youth of his congregation. It was intensely interesting to see the aged, the middle aged, the youth, and the children, all gathering around the dwelling of their aged pastor, and together mingling their tears of sorrow, "that they should see his face no more."

The reader of this Memoir will perceive that comparatively little is here said, of certain traits in the character of Dr. Emmons which were well known to his intimate friends. Among these are his wisdom, wit, cheerfulness and vivacity. Something particular upon each of these traits, and upon the influence which they exerted upon his social character, was contemplated in these passages. But having been favored with the perusal of a lecture recently delivered by Professor Park to the senior class in the theological seminary at Andover, in which this part of the Doctor's character is happily delineated, the writer has thought it proper to request the lecture for publication. It is with great pleasure that he is able to present it to his readers.

MISCELLANEOUS REFLECTIONS

OF A VISITER,

UPON THE CHARACTER OF DR. EMMONS.

A FAMILIAR LECTURE READ BEFORE THE SENIOR CLASS IN ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, BY PROF. EDWARDS A. PARK.

I HAVE imagined that it may not be unprofitable for a class of men who have in view the ministerial office, to hear a familiar essay on the personal and social character of Rev. Nathanael Emmons. The life of any man, more particularly of such a man, may be fruitful of suggestions to any student, and above all to a student for the ministry. During the last fifteen years of his life, Dr. Emmons was regarded as an intellectual, as well as physiological curiosity. He was connected with the church at Franklin seventy years, was its sole pastor fifty-four years, and during his connection with it, saw nearly four hundred of his parishioners profess their faith in Christ. He guided the studies of eighty-seven young men preparing to become ministers of the gospel, and he thus exerted an important influence over at least eighty-seven thousand among the laity. Of those who enjoyed his teaching, several, as Professors Smith, Wines, Fowler and Pond of Bangor, became instructers in theology; and some, as Professor Fisher of New Haven, became eminent as literary men. He published, during his life, more than seven thousand copies of nearly two hundred sermons, besides four labored dissertations, and numerous essays for periodicals. He did not leave theology as he found it. The state of this science, and the consequent power of the Christian ministry, have been perceptibly advanced by his labors. He and his fathers in the ministry have done much toward the formation of New England character. It is impos-

sible for men to come in weekly contact with his acute and vigorous speculations, without acquiring somewhat of that shrewdness and force of mind which have characterized our fellow citizens.

I do not intend to give an elaborate analysis of Dr. Emmons' character, such as may be gleaned from a review of his works and his history; nor to give a scientific delineation of him as a philosopher, or a preacher, or a christian; but to state a few reminiscences of him as he appeared to a visiter, and as his personal peculiarities were connected with his public developements. I do not wish to *confine* myself to a view of his social characteristics, but to intersperse such miscellaneous reflections as have been suggested by intercourse with him; and to detail some of the circumstances, which made him the centre of attraction to all who understood him.

It is not pretended that he was, in the common sense of the term, a popular man, for he was not sufficiently known to be a personal favorite with a large community; but where he was best known, he was most revered; and could the Association of ministers with which he was so long connected, be introduced with him upon the canvass, they would all be painted as reverently looking up to the only man in the group who wore a three-cornered hat. They were wont to visit him as a mental mechanist, who would wind up their intellects and set them in freer motion. The Presidents of our Colleges, the Judges of our Courts, went out of their way to do him reverence. His guests left him with renewed impulse to activity, with larger views of the sphere in which they were called to labor. He did not, at all times, engage the interest of his acquaintance, as he did at chosen times; not abroad, so much as at home; not in extreme old age, as in the prime of life. But few men have exerted greater power with so little parade. His doctrinal sermons give no adequate idea of himself as a man.* They were written in the abstract style of a secluded student, with somewhat of the severity which is natural to one living aloof from and above his race; but no one exhibition of his character exhausted him. His aspect, in the pulpit, and in the published treatise, will not display the whole of the man.

* No one, on the perusal of his *a priori* argument for the divine existence, or of several passages against the indulgence of the fancy, would suppose that he ever allowed his imagination a moment's recess from the tutelage of his judgment. It was however characteristic of him to make simple-hearted and child-like expressions which have but little resemblance to his logical formularies. Once, describing a most unpleasant dilemma in which he was involved, and from which he was extricated by expressing a thought that dropped into his mind suddenly, at the very instant when alone it could avail, he said, in a tone which one would have expected from Izaak Walton, "I do believe it was an immediate suggestion of a good angel."

He had enough of material for five or six different portraitures; enough of manhood to fill out several quite respectable personages. Not but that he had faults of mind and heart; he not only had them, but could afford that others should know them. "No man's character," he used to say, "will bear examining;" and again, "every body has something about him to spoil him." We are not called however to expatiate on his faults, nor on what we may deem to be his doctrinal errors, but to examine the sources of the interest felt in one who never courted the attentions he received, nor sought any of the honors which he found; who disdained to run after the world, but chose to remain tranquilly at home, and to let such come to see him as were so disposed.

A chief source of the interest felt in Dr. Emmons was the fact of his preserving, under many uncongenial influences, so much of the freshness and mellowness of human life. Perhaps the first feeling of strangers on visiting him was that of disappointment. They had heard of the minister of Franklin, as a recluse residing in a still parish, on a quiet road, seldom visiting even his own parishioners, except when they had complied with the direction of James, — "Is any sick among you, let him *call* for the elders of the church," &c. Living such a secluded life, one would naturally be expected to contract an awkwardness and stiffness of manner, an habitual reserve and shyness, from which a man of the world is free. Perhaps he did exhibit some constraint when with strangers in a strange place; but in his own study, no one need be more courteous and affable. Cordiality and good will marked his reception of his guests; whether they harmonized or not with his political or theological views. They found in him many sympathies in common with their own; they could not but see that their company was a pleasure to him; and they accordingly felt the ease and self-satisfaction, which it is the characteristic of a polite man to give his visiters. They had read perhaps the sermons of Dr. Emmons, and found them characterized by metaphysical reasoning, subtile distinctions, a great prominence of those doctrines which are called stern and severe; and remembering the words of Burke, "There is no heart so hard as that of a thorough bred metaphysician," they expected to find for their host an austere man, exsiccated by logic and abstractions. But he showed no hard-featured countenance to his guests; his face was the picture of hearty kindness and good nature; and although he was not unused to a knit brow in his study hours, he would converse on the literature, the politics, the news of the day, with a freshness of interest belonging to a citizen more than a scholar. "Whence

hath this man these things?" was a frequent query of his visiters. That large, spacious white house, which every one would know was the minister's house, with the venerable trees before it, and the neat enclosure around it, was the abode of native complaisance, and unaffected generosity. Unlike some of our ancient clergymen, he preserved a generous style of living, even to the last. Dr. Hopkins, in his old age, lived on charity; and sometimes, when he rose in the morning, did not know where or how he should procure his morsel of bread for the day. Dr. Bellamy, when he had lost the tone of his mind, became too great a burden for his relatives to retain in their houses; was obliged to leave the genial influences of home and kindred, and was boarded at the house of one of his parishioners. But competence and good cheer always smiled upon the guests of Dr. Emmons; his mansion was called the minister's hotel; and no minister's horse would pass it a second time, without giving signs of pleasant remembrances.

That he never yielded to the morbid tendencies of a sedentary and secluded life, is more than can be claimed. It appears from several incidents in his history, that he sometimes worked his intellect with so great intenseness, and found so little intermission of his cares, as to lose for a season his usual amenity; and to say or do things which might with reason be expected of a laborious recluse, but not of a perfect man. Still it is not extravagant to say, that no hard student ever passed seventy years, in one room, with fewer morbid excitements; and if, for a short time, some scholars may have surpassed him in kindliness of manners, these were rare favorites of Providence; and after all, his smiles were diffused through so long a life, that perhaps, in the end, they would outnumber those of the happy men who contracted their joy into a briefer period.

Another source of the interest felt in him was, the resemblance between the outward and the inward man; between his appearance and his character, his manners and his mind. We love to see that force and formative energy of the spirit, which controls the whole expression of the face, and shapes the movement of the limbs. The theory of some Platonising philosophers, that the soul originally makes or developes the body, would find as much confirmation in Dr. Emmons, as in any other one. He was not more than five feet and seven inches high, but he stood erect, and was in all senses *upright*. In his old age he walked like a young man. "My feet," he said, "are the best part of me." When he appeared in the streets of a New England city, a few years ago, with his three cornered hat, the bright buckles on his shoe and knee, his white locks flowing

down his shoulders, the boys flocked after him, as after a military general. Once, as he was seen walking with his usual dignity over a parade ground, it was well said of him, that he might be taken for some veteran commander, re-visiting the plain over which he had marched seventy years before. Nor was his character less dignified than his person. He would be one of the last men to be suspected of a meanness.

He was scrupulously neat in his person and dress, and he kept every thing in order around him. System characterized his movements. His guests would always find his hat hanging on the same nail in his study. Every chair was in its place; every book on its shelf, save the one he was reading; and that was put into the book-case, as soon as a visiter arrived. I remember hearing the late Dr. Harris, of Dunbarton, N. H., thus relate the scenes of the first day which he spent at the Franklin parsonage. "Having served as a soldier in the Revolutionary war, I went to read theology with Dr. Emmons. As I was expecting to remain several months a member of his family, he felt that he might be more free with me than with other strangers, and he wished to lose no time in training me to habits of order. After I had taken my seat with him by the fire, a brand fell upon the hearth; and as I was the younger man, and withal the pupil, I arose and put the brand in its place, but put the tongs on the left of the jamb. The Doctor instantly removed the tongs to the right of the jamb. In a few minutes more, the fire fell down the second time; I rectified the matter, and put the tongs again on the left of the fire place. The Doctor rose again, and put them on the right. Soon the brands fell the third time; and as the Doctor's movements had appeared to me somewhat singular, I determined to find out what they meant. Having adjusted the brands, therefore, I placed the tongs, designedly, along with the shovel at my left. My teacher then arose, and having corrected my third error, looked significantly in my face, and said: 'My young friend, as you are going to stay with me, I wish to tell you, now, that I keep my shovel at the left of my fire, and my tongs at the right.' From this incident," continued Dr. H., "I learned one of the most useful maxims of a theologian; never to put on the left hand what belongs to the right; never to place together what ought to be kept separate; always to discriminate between things that differ; and to be accurate in small things as well as great."

It has been said, though there are many exceptions to the remark, that we can determine the character of a student, from the appearance of his study and his dress. If so, we should suppose Dr. Emmons to be a man of pure and correct taste, of

rigid system, of inflexible adherence to rule. And it was so. His style of writing was neat as his white locks. Though we may not say with an eminent critic, that "his style for didactic writing is just about perfect;" yet we may say, that, in a good degree, it answers the definition which Dean Swift gave of style, "Proper words in proper places." Several autographs of those who signed the Declaration of American Independence are said to give a striking epitome of their respective peculiarities. The appearance of Dr. Emmons' manuscripts is a good representation of his character. He was always attentive to his chirography, and wrote a better hand at the age of seventy-five than at thirty-five. He loved to notice skilful penmanship, though he was not satisfied with this as the chief merit of what he read. Looking at a well penned manuscript, he once remarked, "What a pity that a man who can write so well, had n't something to write." Before he began his composition, he had arranged all the ideas which he meant to express, so that his sermons were penned with scarcely an erasure or interlineation, and the first draught of them looked like a copy; yet very few of them were ever copied. No one could be long in his company, without perceiving that even his conversational thoughts were classified. It had become a habit for him to introduce his remarks with numerical designations, first, second, third; and being thus distinguished, they would be remembered. Taking his leave of a young man whom he never expected to see again, he said, "You must keep yourself familiar with three ideas; first, the nature of holiness; secondly, the nature of sin; thirdly, your responsibilities for eternity. Holiness, supreme love to the highest good, is beautiful in its own nature, but costs self denial. Sin, the love of a smaller good more than the greater, is hateful in its own nature, but is deceptive; and while it pleases, will ruin the transgressor. We are accountable for every voluntary action, to a Being who hates all sin, and will never clear the guilty." Here was a compressed sermon, with its divisions and subdivisions. When told by a young collegian, that he contemplated the study of medicine, Dr. E. remarked, with his usual ease: "Men have different criteria by which they judge of a physician. I have five; first, good common sense; secondly, a power and disposition to discriminate; thirdly, previous opportunities for professional study; fourthly, a habit of reflecting on his daily practice, and systematizing his conclusions; fifthly, right moral feelings." On being asked what was the best system of rhetoric for a clergyman, he replied: "These two rules make the best system; first, Have something to say; second, Say it." Whether Dr. Emmons were unduly governed by his love of

order, whether his fondness for system made him too tenacious of a theory, too logical or rigid in explaining a scripture, too pertinacious in his determination to be on a straight line, is a question for his readers to decide. Certain it is, that he eschewed loose trains of thought, and ill compacted views, as well as a slouching attitude, and an unseemly dishabille.

I have spoken of dignity, of neatness and order, as strikingly developed in the person and the character of Dr. Emmons. Quickness was another characteristic of his outward and inward movements. South might have said, "that his body was a fit workhouse for sprightly, vivid faculties to exercise and exert themselves in. It was of so much quickness and agility, that it did not only contain, but also represent the soul; for we might well suppose that where God did deposit so rich a jewel, he would suitably adorn the case." The provincial dialect concerning him was, "He is a *spry* man." His gait was brisk. His hands seldom moved clumsily, or as if they were numb. The twinkling of his eye, as it darted out some bright idea, was the delight of the eyes of his beholders. His enunciation was rapid, and this added keenness and point to his repartees. The manner and the matter of his conversation were often sparkling. His quickness in retort took his companions by surprise. It was a rare man, who was not sometimes discomfited by the lightning-like rapidity of his sallies, when he was in his happier moods, and disposed for an encounter of wit. Not his eye only, but his whole face would appear to scintillate; and his monosyllables would seemingly spring from him, instead of being passively uttered. Hence the *bon-mots* which came from him lose much of their force, when not associated with the vivacity and suddenness which his manner gave them. They did instant execution. His sermon on the perdition of Judas was republished and reviewed by a Universalist clergyman, the review and the sermon being printed in the same pamphlet. He was asked, "What do you think of sending out together, before the world, two such things as your sermon and a Universalist's reply?" "It is against the law," was his sudden answer; "for it is said in Deuteronomy, 'thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.'"* On one occasion, a Universalist minister called on him, and heard him express his disapprobation of certain new measures which the orthodox churches were adopting. His objections were uttered in the privacy of his own parlor, and of course without the slightest suspicion of their being made public. The next week he was told, that all these remarks were published in a certain Universalist periodical, and would probably damp the zeal of some

* Deuteronomy, xxii. 10.

sincere christians. "No, no," he replied; "that paper publishes so many falsehoods, that it cannot be believed when it publishes the truth; and every one who reads my remarks in it, will conclude, of course, that I never made them." It is well known, that while he believed in the entire sinfulness of all the voluntary exercises which precede conversion, a sinfulness commencing with the commencement of moral being and therefore called native, or more properly natural depravity; he denied the existence of sin in any passive principle or state, or any thing distinct from an exercise of the will. He disapproved of the phrase, original sin, as it is understood to mean something more than the certainty of sinning, something other than actual sin. When asked, What is the difference between natural depravity and original sin, the answer came ere the question was fully uttered, "Natural depravity is the truth; original sin is a lie." Many and many a bright saying flashed from him, in the twinkling of an eye, which would lead to a month's meditation. Pity it is, that some one did not record the apothegms as they fell from him, and fasten in a sure place, those thoughts that shot forth like meteors. The keenness, quickness and comprehensiveness of his remarks reminded one of Talleyrand's conversation; and if, as has been well said, it be the prerogative of genius to startle the mind with great truths, in the form of terse, racy proverbs, Dr. Emmons was a man of genius. He has compressed volumes into pithy sentences, which will be repeated long after their origin is forgotten. This suggests another remark.

An important source of the interest felt in Dr. Emmons, was the instructiveness of his conversation. Some men, like Sir James Mackintosh, prefer to disclose the treasures of their wisdom in a private circle, rather than in the public debate or through the press; others are chary of their words, and either from a vanity of authorship, or a want of readiness in the social interview, reserve all their thoughts for the printed page. Dr. Emmons was as ready with his tongue as with his pen. He had not the literary miser's desire to conceal his jewels of thought, through fear that some other man might display them to the public, and gain the credit of having himself discovered them in the mire. Without the parlor eloquence of Robert Hall, or of Dr. Dwight, without brilliancy but with brightness, without splendor but with the clearness of day, he gave utterance to a compressed wisdom, and an amount of grave, well conned instruction which would continue day after day to develope a new and hidden value. His style of conversing was more sententious and epigrammatic than his style of writing.

It was full of well defined sentences, which could be easily detached from their connections, and thus answer the etymology of the word aphorism. Those who are interested in the table talk of Coleridge, or Bacon, or Luther, will not disdain to accept a few fragments which have fallen from Dr. Emmons; and which will illustrate, better than any prolonged analysis, the style of his didactic conversation. The following are a few miscellaneous gleanings from his table talk, for the most of which I am indebted to three or four of his clerical friends.

"Strict Calvinism brings God near to us; all opposing systems put him far away."

"Of the two Edwardses, the father had more reason than his son, but the son was a greater reasoner than his father."

"Whatever President Edwards investigated for himself, he understood and mastered; but in his treatise on Original Sin, he took his first principle on trust, and hence is like a great horse floundering in the mire. The more he tries to push through, the deeper in he gets."

"The weakest spot in every man is where he thinks himself to be wisest."

"Great objects form great minds." "Great men always commit great errors."

"Reason is the same thing in God, in angels, and in men."

"There is not so much difference in men's ideas of first principles and elementary truths as is commonly thought; a greater difference lies in their power of reasoning from these principles."

"Just definitions, like just distinctions, either prevent or end disputes."

"If men will define depravity and volition as they ought to, they will understand the most important doctrines of the Bible."

"The more men have multiplied the forms of religion, so much the more has vital godliness declined."

"There was not a divine in America who understood the true use of the means of grace, until Sandeman drove some upon correct ground."

"Associationism leads to Consociationism; Consociationism leads to Presbyterianism; Presbyterianism leads to Episcopacy; Episcopacy leads to Roman Catholicism; and Roman Catholicism is an ultimate fact."

"Every thing that captivates will at length disgust; therefore popularity cannot live."

"Style is only the frame to hold our thoughts. It is like the sash of a window; a heavy sash will obscure the light. The object is to have as little sash as will hold the lights, that we may not think of the frame, but have the most light."

To a young preacher he said, "Never try to do what you know you cannot do; never try to be what you know you cannot be; but try to preach better and better every Sabbath, which you can do." "So construct your sentences as to bring out your principal meaning as early as possible; this will secure brevity and perspicuity; it relieves the minds of hearers or readers, and facilitates the entrance of ideas."*

Being asked, "What is the secret of popular preaching?" he replied, "To preach without meddling with your hearers' consciences;" and again, "Preach with animation enough to produce a great excitement of the natural sympathies, which will make persons think they have some native goodness;" and still again, "Let your sermons be without beginning, middle or end."

"We ought to judge ministers not only by what they do say, but by what they do not say."

"It is a great pity that certain men who can preach so well, do not preach better."

"Be careful how you take up a book, especially an entertaining one, with which you have no particular concern. Read the old authors which have stood the test of time. Read with a particular object in view."

"Every man should study himself, and adopt such rules of diet, and of mental and moral discipline, as suit his own peculiarities."

"The great objection to the writings of Tillotson, Barrow, and that class of preachers is, that they never teach the difference between a good and a bad man."

To a young scholar he remarked, "If you find a hill in the path of science, climb over it and not run around it. Then you will have made some perceptible advance; but one may travel on a plain ever so long, and seem to make no progress." "Let your eloquence flow from your heart to your hands, and never attempt to force it the other way."

"Every man carries a little world within himself, by knowing which he may know all the rest of mankind, and form a just estimate of human nature."

Being asked, "What is space?" he replied, "Nothing."

"Our most trying afflictions come unexpectedly. I have often seen the clouds of adversity gathering over Mendon hills, but they would generally disperse before they reached Franklin; but those troubles that come in at the back door are most

* The author of this article does not mean to be considered as endorsing every expression which Dr. Emmons has made, or every theory which he has advanced; but simply as stating some things which may suggest other things to the inquisitive.

grievous to be borne. We are unprepared for them, and the suddenness of their shock often prostrates us."

"When we suffer in the presence of a multitude, our natural pride makes us bear the suffering with fortitude."

"The best way of training children to prevent their doing wrong, (he said ironically,) is to threaten them thus: "If you do that again, I'll ——."

"I never could think well of a man's intellectual or moral character, if he was habitually unfaithful to his appointments."

"A man must not only know the truth, but know that he knows it."

"He is a learned man who understands one subject, and a very learned man who understands two subjects."

On being asked what was the most important requisite for a preacher, he replied, "That he be established in first principles. If he be not, he will continually contradict himself. The most important requisites for an *extemporaneous* preacher are ignorance, impudence, and presumption. It is a great blessing to be able to talk half an hour about nothing. The great body of extemporaneous preachers are *pro tempore* preachers. It is easy, *very* easy, to preach, but very hard to preach well. I have often wondered at myself that I ever agreed to preach two sermons a week. It makes me shudder at times to think that I ever dared to do it. No other profession demands half so much mental labor as ours."

"In writing sermons, always have a plan, and let every sentence help accomplish that plan. Let your sermons and your prayers have a beginning, middle and end. Keep your best and most important thought till the last. The close of a sermon should be like the approach of a ship to the wharf *with all sails standing*."

"Be short in all religious exercises. Better leave the people longing than loathing. *No conversions after the hour is out.*"

"For attaining perspicuity and precision of style, first, consider *what* you wish to say, and then *how* to say it."

The following remarks were written by Dr. Emmons, in the form of rules for a student in divinity; but they were often repeated by him incidentally in conversation:

"1. Habituate yourself to examine the evidence of every thing you believe, without trusting to education, former opinion, or the assertion of others.

"2. Begin the study of divinity at the root, and not at the branches; that is to say, begin at the first principles of theology, which are few and plain, and afterwards trace them out in their various consequences, relations, and connections.

"3. In order to fix your first principles, or fundamental doc-

trines, beside the Bible, read a few of the best authors on each side of the point you would wish to establish.

"4. In reading authors, aim more at possessing yourself with their general scheme and principal arguments, than with their particular expressions and incidental sentiments; and while you labor to retain their ideas, labor to forget their words, which, if retained, will tend to prevent your making their ideas your own. Therefore, abound not in extracts.

"5. Follow not too strictly the path of any particular divine or divines; for, by *following*, you will never overtake them; but endeavor, if possible, to find out some new, nearer, and easier way, by which you may get before, and really add some pittance to the common stock of theological knowledge.

"6. Let divinity be your supreme study, with an eye to which let all your other reading, study, conversation and remarks be directed.

"7. Let your sermon, like a sugar loaf, begin at a point, and widen and expand to the end.

"8. First address the understanding, secondly the conscience, and lastly the passions of your hearers.

"9. Endeavor to leave the *subject* of your discourse on the minds of your hearers, rather than a few striking *sentiments* or *expressions*.

"10. Take care, in delivery, to stand *behind* and not *before* your subject.

"11. Preach *upon* your subject, and not *about* it."

Another source of the interest felt in Dr. Emmons, was his facetiousness. He was, constitutionally, a wit; if wit consist in the power of detecting such resemblances between dissimilar objects, and such differences between resembling objects, as will both surprise and please. Acuteness of discrimination is needed for discovering these diversities and similitudes. Dr. Emmons was proverbially acute. Alertness and vivacity of mind are essential for suddenly developing these relations. His mind was so rapid, that his witticisms would seem to come in showers. A brisk flow of animal spirits is necessary for that exercise which must at once produce two effects, astonish and please. He was seldom stupid, and the cheerfulness resulting from his well controlled body, and peaceful conscience, qualified him to please as well as to surprise. "He was the most uniformly cheerful man I ever knew," said a clergyman who had lived in his vicinity for thirty years. Aware that wit is a dangerous faculty, he was truly philosophical in his management of it. He indulged it as he partook of food, for the sake of preserving that health of mind, as well as body, which is a

necessary condition of the highest Christian usefulness. He was not abstinent in all things, but temperate in all things. It is one sign of his true greatness, that he could be temperate in an indulgence from which weaker men abstain through fear of excess. He was free on the one hand from that superstition which dreads, as if sin were there, the appropriate exercise of a faculty implanted in our natures by God, and the tempered action of which doeth good like a medicine. He was equally free on the other hand from humoring even a constitutional susceptibility farther than a just equipoise of the system demanded. When he had slept enough, or drank enough, or smiled enough, he would resume his toil. The indulgence of wit at improper times, in an improper degree, on improper subjects, becomes levity. From levity he was as free as from stupidity. If a serious topic required him to leave an amusing train of remark, he would drop his facetiousness, and show himself at home in the discussion or the admonition. The facility of his change from the one to the other, indicated that both were under the control of religious principle. When the bow was unstrung, it was so for a wise reason; and he would seize it and bend it at the instant of the summons.

It is difficult to say how much of his usefulness had been lost, if he had harbored that anile bigotry which would banish from our spiritual mechanism the lubricating oil of joy, without which the wheels drag, and the machine wears out. A man who could say, when nearly a century old, "I never took an hour's exercise for the sake of exercise, in my life," who had studied on an average ten hours a day, for more than half a century; such a man would have become a morbid hypochondriac, or an obtuse plodder, unless his mind had received relaxation and tone, and elastic versatile energy, from the use of that gift which distinguishes men from brutes, and sane men from idiots. Indeed there must have been some such recreation in order to perpetuate his life through so many eventful periods, amid so many perplexing and fatiguing studies.

Some men, who are never guilty of startling others with agreeable remarks, have felt themselves authorized thereby to pronounce a censure upon Dr. Emmons as less apostolical in his conversation than they deem consistent with the command, "be sober." But if sobriety consist in preserving the mental faculties free from indolence on the one hand, and morbid or useless action on the other, Dr. Emmons was pre-eminently a sober man. His gravity indeed was not such, that "Newton might have deduced from it the law of gravitation;" yet it was a rational gravity. No man could be farther than he from that foolish talking and jesting which a scriptural philoso-

phy condemns. There was a meaning in his wit. It was full of mind. One of our older writers would have said, that his humor was not the "mere crackling of thorns, a sudden blaze of the spirits, the exultation of a tickled fancy, or a pleased appetite. It was a masculine and serene thing; the recreation of the judgment, the jubilee of reason." In what certain men would call his folly, he uttered more wise remarks than these wise men uttered in their wisdom. He knew what to say, and when and where to say it. In the private circle, on secular themes, he did not always express himself as if he were in the pulpit. He adhered to the resolution of President Edwards, "never to utter any thing that is sportive or matter of laughter on the Lord's day."

It is a remarkable instance of his well balanced mind, that while he was exuberant in pleasantries, at fitting seasons, he never interspersed his graver remarks with ludicrous allusions. In his thousands of pulpit discourses, there is not a single risible expression; and no one could ever suspect from a perusal of them, that he could indulge his mind in mere fanciful relations. But when he had tasked his reason to its utmost intensity for the benefit of his hearers, and still detected in any of them a peccadillo or a crime which could be shot at in no other way, he would let fly some witty sarcasm; which would show that he had always a dernier resort, and when foiled with one weapon, could turn his hand immediately to another. It is said of Lord Thurlow, that he was a kind of *guarda costa* vessel, which cannot meet every turning and winding of a frigate that assails her; but when the opportunity offers, pours a broadside which cannot fail of sinking the assailant. But Dr. Emmons was armed on all sides, and at all points. There was no such thing as getting round him without receiving a shock. Hence he was feared by evil doers of every class. He meant to be. He employed his wit upon them, when reason failed of its influence. There was a skeptic in religion who was very fond of displaying his acumen before ministers of the gospel, and of perplexing them with atheistical queries. On one occasion he called on the man who was not so easily perplexed, and after giving sensible evidence that he was too highly stimulated with brandy for any rational conversation, he asked with the gravity of a sage, "Dr. Emmons, can you tell me what I am to understand by *the soul* of man?" "No," said the Doctor. "I can't tell a man that has n't got any." Here ended the skeptic's inquiries. On another occasion, an intemperate grand-son of one of Dr. Emmons' friends accosted him in the presence of several by-standers, and endeavored to make them believe that he was familiarly acquainted with the Doctor.

But he did not receive the recognition which he expected. "What," he said, under some chagrin, "do you not know me, Doctor? I have held the stirrup for you to mount your horse, many a time, when you were at my grand-father's." "You look as if you had never been in so good business since," was the reply that interrupted all his professions, and led him to reflect on the moral significance of a red face.

Another source of the interest felt in Dr. Emmons, was the combination of so many qualities in his character, which are often thought to be discordant. His dignity has been mentioned. He could easily keep others at a distance, when his nature and his duty required. It was not uncommon for strong men to tremble in his presence. Hence there has seldom lived a pastor who was more truly the bishop of his parish, and whose word was clothed with more authority.* But though dignified, he was simple hearted as a child. Like Luther and Calvin, he could talk with children as if one of them, and had a hearty interest in their sports. The children of his intimate friends were warmly attached to him, and anticipated the day of their visit to his house as a holiday. Men did not feel, in his presence, that he was desirous of gaining admiration by affected reserve, or of concealing a weakness under the garb of profound abstracted thought. He was a prudent man; else he could not have ruled so long and so well, in the Lord's house, especially during such exciting scenes as those of our Revolution, and the succeeding years. Yet he was frank, wearing before his heart the glass through which his companions might look. When Dr. Bellamy was in that unhappy state of mental disorder, which cast a gloom over his latter days, he once imagined that he was in paradise, and on the point of calling a party of his friends around him, and of receiving their kind offices. He mentioned one of his former pupils, whom he would invite to serve him, but instantly recalled the pupil's name: "No, not he; he is a mysterious character, and a mysterious character is always a dangerous one."† This pupil was subsequently an intimate friend of Dr. Emmons, but in respect of mysteriousness, was his exact antipode, and sometimes reproved him for excessive frankness. Perhaps there was reason for the reproof; there may be too little concealment of a man's thoughts, but

* In allusion to the fact that he was ordained in the open air, and his people were stationed during the service at some elevation above him, he was accustomed to say, that he was "settled under his people." Still, he presided over them.

† This remark of Dr. Bellamy was often repeated by Judge Reeve, of Litchfield, to his law students, as one of the sanest which an insane man could make.

there is oftener too much; and there is nothing which imparts a chill to social intercourse, like the closeness and shy reserve which characterize the wary tactician. It was his open heartedness which gave so peculiar a charm to the man whose character we are now contemplating. Instead of evading an inquiry which he preferred not to answer, he would frankly tell you that he chose to be silent. "I do not wish to be catechised on that subject," was his reply to a distinguished professor, who was pushing a personal examination rather too far. You would feel confident in his society, that you knew his attachments and aversions; sure that he was not searching for your opinions, in order to make such a use of them afterwards as you would dislike; free from suspicion that he was plotting any manœuvre under ground. He never stooped in ambush, nor allowed his opposers to complain that they were decoyed upon false tracks. If, like some of the apostles, he had received a new name at the time of his ordination, what better name could have been given him than that of Nathanael? for he was an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile.

Modesty and self respect are qualities which, though seldom coalescing in one man, were happily blended in him. In the company of strangers he was often thought to be diffident, sometimes bashful. This appearance did not, as it does in some, result from mere nervous weakness, or from being unaccustomed to society, or from a self esteem which receives no sanction from the deference of the bystander. He was naturally predisposed to think of himself no more highly than he ought to think, and to esteem other men, in some respects, above himself. But not in all respects. He knew his own worth, and did not succumb to his brethren, when he believed that an impartial judge would require concessions from them. He was not arrogant, but where he felt that he had a right to govern, he governed. He would not pretend to know what he was ignorant of, but sometimes confessed his inability to give the information which was desired and expected of him. He would not defend his assertions when he suspected them of unsoundness; but if he had made a mistake, he made an atonement for it by confessing it. On one occasion, he was severely criticised by the well known Mr. Niles, afterwards Judge Niles of Vermont, before an Association of ministers, to whom Dr. E. had just preached a sermon. He replied to the criticism, acknowledging its justness, and remarking that, somehow or other, he had not gotten into his subject when he wrote the discourse. His critic interrupted him, saying, "No, no, Mr. Emmons, that is not the difficulty; here it is; the subject

never got into you." The criticism, he afterwards remarked, was no more severe than true.*

He had a peculiar mode of reproving an opponent, which indicated both his modesty and his confidence in his own opinion. Being aware that every important doctrine is liable to some objections, he was contented to show that the doctrine of his opposer was liable to greater objections than his own. When pressed with a difficulty, his resort was to prove that the same difficulty was involved in the system of his adversary. If, therefore, his opponent were pertinacious in repeating a query, which neither party could answer, he would say reprovingly, "You have no right to ask me that question; it belongs to you as well as myself; I can answer it as well as you, and you as well as I."† If, however, his opponent were on an equality with himself in age or character, he would say not a word to the question which was pressed upon him; but, by his silence, would imply that the disputer was unfair in confining to one theory an objection which belongs to every other one. Three celebrated professors of theology have been severally met in this manner by silence and a flushed cheek. They supposed that Dr. Emmons was discomfited in the argument, and could not reply. He intended modestly to teach them that no true philosopher will insist on demonstrative evidence for a moral truth, and on the absence of all objections to a theory, which, though it may be *understood* by finite minds, cannot be *comprehended.*

He was not always, however, thus delicate in rebuking an opponent. If one whom he knew to be his inferior assumed a lordly attitude, and spoke to him in the tones of a master, he signified to the supercilious disputant that it were well for every man to know his place. A certain divine, the junior of Dr. Emmons by several years, unequal to him in acumen and theological knowledge, and under some peculiar obligation to treat him with deference; was fond, although doubtless a very good man, of appearing like a metropolitan before the minis-

* As an illustration of his frankness and modesty, it is narrated of him, that he once spent several hours in company with Dr. Burton, his distinguished opponent on the "taste and exercise" question, and was asked by one of his pupils, after the conversation had closed, "What was the result of your discussion with your antagonist?" "No result," was the reply. "Neither of us broached the subject." Why? "We were both too much afraid of each other."

† It was the fashion with the early New England divines to apply this kind of *argumentum ad hominem*, and to be satisfied with showing that their opponent was environed with the same difficulties with themselves. Dr. Hopkins seldom endeavored to meet the objections advanced against him, except by advancing the same against the objector. In this respect, and in several others, Dr. Emmons modelled his style of conversation after that of the authors of the "New Divinity."

ter of Franklin; and as he was physically at least a *great* man, much superior in altitude to the Doctor, he was inclined to look down upon the country parson as the smaller of the two. This domineering treatment was endured with patience until patience ceased to be a virtue. Having read Dr. Emmons' sermon on the Atonement, a sermon which was encountering at that time some opposition, he sent to the Franklin minister the following epistle, which was considered rather too laconic, magisterial and patronizing to comport with the apostle's rule for the treatment of elders: "May 1st. My dear brother, I have read your sermon on the Atonement, and have wept over it. Yours affectionately, A. B. C." These admonitory words were no sooner read, than the following reply was written and sent to the Post Office: "May 3d. Dear Sir, I have read your letter, and laughed at it. Yours, Nath'l. Emmons." The reader will perhaps admit that there was no *shorter* way of reminding a man in high life not to overlook modest worth; and of showing that an elder in the church must be reasoned with before he is wept over.

There was a peculiar combination of candor with inflexibleness, of kindness with severity, in Dr. Emmons. He was aware that some readers of his works had been led by his phraseology, to look upon him as devoid of the milder graces. When such a reader once remarked to him, "I have come several miles out of my way to see you," he smiled, and said, "Now you see the bear. Men go out of their way to look at me, as if I were a wild beast. But see, I have no horns." What was sinful or improper, he could not endure, but strove to reform the person whose conduct he loathed. His feelings would discriminate between the offender as a man, and the offender as a representative of evil. Never conniving at false doctrine, yet liberal to the men who embraced it, he was beloved by his opponents. Seldom did he utter a word against their personal character. Such of his opposers therefore as *knew* him, never maligned him. He would sometimes reprove men with some sharpness in their presence, and commend them for some virtue in their absence. Young clergymen often received from him such criticisms as would mortify them, but attach them to the critic. When a young man had preached a whole system of theology in one discourse, the Doctor asked him, on leaving the pulpit, "Do you ever mean to preach another sermon?" "Yes, Sir." "What have you got to say? You 've preached about every thing this morning." When another young man, to whom the Doctor was rather partial, and who was really a man of promise, had delivered a discourse with too much pomposity of manner, and in an inflated style, he requested the private criticism of his

more paternal counsellor. The critic, ninety years old, rose from his chair, protruded his chest, inflated his cheeks, raised his eye brows, and after a significant puff, sat down, not saying a word, but smiling at his useful pantomime. To a candidate for settlement, he said, "You have struck twelve first. Fools will complain if you do not strike thirteen next. These men will complain if you do." To another he said, "Your sermon was too much like Seekonk plain, long and level." Being asked by a young preacher, whose sermon on the preceding Sabbath did not entirely please him, "why it was that young clergymen felt so small after talking with him," he said, "Because they feel so big before they come." Conversing, at a public dinner, with one who was thought to have swerved from the faith; his opponent, being somewhat hardly pressed, said, with considerable strength of voice, "Well, every tub must stand upon its own bottom." "Yes, yes," added the Doctor, "but what shall those tubs do that have n't any bottoms?" He formed a candid estimate of the several learned professions, and had a peculiar respect for the science of law. "If I were to prepare for the ministry again," he said, "I would study law first." He often devoted his attention to legal treatises. His sermon on the law of Paradise is a beautiful specimen of the benefit he derived from such studies. The society of learned jurists was highly prized by him, yet he did not overlook the faults incident to the legal profession; and when asked what he thought of lawyers as a class, he replied, "I like them best at a distance." It was obvious that remarks of this character were made by him without personal unkindness, and that he would never persecute the man whom he had frankly or even bluntly criticised. Such was the confidence of his parish in the kindness of his temper, that even the insane would sometimes insist on being sent to the parsonage for relief. When their request was granted, they uniformly received from him that gentle and affectionate treatment which their malady demands. He early adopted the same principles for the treatment of this afflicted class, which are now adopted by our most scientific physicians. Those who have read what in common parlance are called his Pharaoh and Jeroboam sermons, and thence derived their notions of his character, would little expect that his company would be sought as a balm for the wounded spirit, and a soothing appliance for an irritated nerve. He furnished a good illustration of the remark, "Severitatem istam pari jucunditate condire, summaeque gravitati tantum comitatis adjungere, non minus difficile quam magnum est." We might proceed in developing the combination of diverse excellences in Dr. Emmons; his union, for example, of quickness in his mental operations with judiciousness and

care, with constancy also, and perseverance. A rapid thinker is often reckless and indiscreet; still oftener inconstant and fitful.

Another source of the interest felt in Dr. Emmons, was the influence which his character exerted upon his system of theology, and his system of theology upon his character. The former was incorporated with the latter; each worked itself out through the other. His system was Emmonsism; for it was his own, and although he had received part of it from his predecessors, it did not pass through his mind without taking his image. For example, open hearted honesty has been mentioned as his characteristic. He chose to conceal nothing, to know the worst. He disliked all ambages and circumgyrations, and dreaded to be even suspected of cunning. "Of all animals," he said, "I do most heartily detest a fox." He saw that some divines adopted a system of moral agency, which, when pursued to its ultimatum, refers the existence of sin to the will of Heaven. But these writers adopt circumlocutory language in explaining the origin of moral evil, and leave the divine causation to be a matter of inference. They are reluctant to march up on a straight line to the avowal, that God makes peace and creates evil. Dr. Emmons is for the straight line. "I believe, and therefore speak," was his motto; and lest he should be suspected of *covering up* something, of not fully exposing the hardest of his doctrine, he selects language which will not bear a construction milder than the true one. If he is to be mistaken by others, he chooses to be mistaken for the worse rather than for the better. If he is to be thought a hypocrite, he prefers to lose rather than gain by his hypocrisy. This fondness for proclaiming the whole truth, this dread of ever seeming to shun an inference, especially an unpopular one, induced him to say, "God stood by the criminal, and moved him to the crime." Calvinists have been often accused of believing that God is the author of sin. Their standard theological systems repel this charge, because, in a very important sense, God is not the author of sin.

But Dr. Emmons, though he believes that in the important sense above referred to, God does not originate moral evil, yet believes, that in another sense he does originate it; that he is the universal cause; that he is the author of all things; and why should we hesitate to say that the author of all things is the author of this particular thing? Thus does our patriarch move straight forward, and boldly adopt the very phrase which has been disowned as a slander by Calvinistic divines. He might have expressed his theory in language which would have never excited popular odium; but he shrunk, with the sensitiveness of

a cavalier from the least appearance of cringing for the favor of men. He never seemed to have learned the old fable

> "Sed tacitus pasci si posset corvus, haberet
> Plus dapis et rixae multo minus invidiaeque."

The controversy between Dr. Emmons and some of his opposers, is a curious one. They believe that God has created within us a nature which is sinful. He denies it, for this, among other reasons, that such a belief makes God the author of sin which man has no freedom in committing. He believes that God creates the wrong exercises of a free agent. They deny this theory because it makes God the author of sin. Their doctrine makes God the cause of a moral evil which we have no agency in committing; his doctrine makes God the cause of a moral evil which we have an agency in committing. He was honest in expressing all that his doctrine implied; they were cautious in not expressing all that their doctrine implied. He evinced his perspicacity in seeing that, on their system, not less than on his own, moral evil must be traced ultimately to the mysterious will of Heaven. They manifested their prudence in not declaring the truth which he saw. They were not dishonest in concealing, but he was honest in avowing. They were not obtuse in their discernment but he was sharp-sighted. On the other hand he was not rash, but scorned an evasion. He was not regardless, more than his opposers, of the stain which might by an abuse of his theory be cast upon Jehovah; but he believed that God dwells in light, and they who come to the light shall find no darkness at all. If his theory does reflect a dishonor upon the divine government, that of some who controvert him reflects the same. "These men," he says, "censure me for declaring that God creates sin; but do they know, or not, that they believe the same but do not declare it? They blame me for denying free-agency; but I assert it, and they virtually deny it. I teach, that God creates within us free moral exercises. Can they say that exercises which are *created free* are not free. One of my opposers once said in a sermon, that an exercise which is not self-originated cannot be voluntary, and if it is *made* free, it is *not* free. But this man was by birth an Irishman."

Another characteristic of Dr. Emmons, which exerted a perceptible influence over his system, and received a reciprocal influence from it, was decision. A preference of the positive attitude above the negative. His whole deportment, even in the common interchange of civilities, showed his definiteness and fixedness of mind. Being asked his opinion respecting a certain quaternion of theologians, he summed it up in the following words: "The first is Calvinisticalish; the second Calvinis-

tical; the third Calvinistic; the fourth a Calvinist. For my own part, I wish to be either something or nothing, in theology. I hate to be something-ish." His mind was *made up* on theological questions, and his answers were never a little more positive than negative, and considerably more negative than positive; somewhat more of yes than no, and rather more of no than yes. His communication was, Yea, yea, Nay, nay. His theological tenets were like his treatment of them, positive in their character. Hence the impression they made on the people to whom they were preached. When an audience heard on one Sabbath, that God is the efficient cause of all moral exercises; on the next, that man is as free as we can conceive him to be, that he has a natural power to frustrate the decrees of God, that he can repent as easily as refuse to repent; and on the next Sabbath, that man's entire dependence and entire freedom are perfectly harmonious with each other; the audience were in fact, as a philosopher would predict of them, startled at each of these three discourses; stimulated to inquire into the complex theme; and when they yielded assent to his doctrine, they became strongly attached to it, it was so prominent and straight-forward. Whether in religious or civil concernments, a positive attitude will be more commanding than any other. Hence this attitude was uniformly adopted from motives of policy by Napoleon, who perhaps understood, better than any other modern, how to manage masses of men. The multitude will never follow a leader who is not bold and unwavering. The inefficiency and decline of Unitarianism are the natural results of the softliness and pliancy which have characterized it. A system of negations will never enlist the sympathies of the people. It was the *nature* of Dr. Emmons to take positive ground; and had he possessed a different nature, his sagacity might have led him to take the same. "If I learned," he once remarked, "that my congregation were displeased with any of my sentiments, I made it my rule to preach them more and more explicitly, until their complaints ceased." He knew that a people would never respect their minister, if he sailed round and round Point No-Point: he must sail for a definite port, and know whither he is bound, and steer directly *by* the rocks and the quick-sands, and not ask the advice of his cabin passengers, nor beg his sailors to pardon him for venturing to have a mind of his own.

It is a prominent feature of Dr. Emmons's theological system, to exalt disinterestedness as the necessary condition of virtue. He believed that rectitude is, in its own nature, apart from any benefits connected with it, a good, and the highest good; that supreme love to God involves, on our part, a willingness to

abandon our eternal peace, if the interests of the universe could be promoted thereby; that God has created all things for his own glory, not because it is *his* glory, but because it is the greatest possible glory; that the excellence and happiness of all beings, even of the Deity, consist in the denial of self *as self;* and that God would relinquish his throne, if it were not the best possible throne, and if the retaining of it were not, in itself, the highest good.

Such speculations had an obvious influence upon him in his conversation respecting his own interests. He would talk about Dr. Emmons, as if he were a third person. Any mistake which he had made, or injury which he had received, would be described by him as if they had no relation to him. I once asked him, "Did you ever correspond with any eminent clergymen in other lands?" "Not much," was his reply; "I had the following intercourse with Dr. Ryland, of Bristol, England. In writing to Dr. West, he expressed a desire to correspond with a few of Dr. Hopkins's friends; with *any* of them, indeed, except Mr. Emmons of Franklin." On the same principle, remarks in his praise would be repeated by Dr. Emmons in his old age, with no more apology than if they were in praise of an absent one. He seemed to commend himself "not because it was himself, but because it was a valuable self; because it contained a more than ordinary amount of President Edwards's 'being in general;' and because the good which existed in him was as worthy of gratitude, as the same amount of good in any other subject."

This freedom, however, in saying what might have been more safely said by his admirers, was not offensive to those who fully comprehended him. It was an outflowing of such a childlike simplicity, that a visiter was rather pleased with it than otherwise. If every one would commend himself just as much, just as little, and just as deservedly, as Dr. Emmons, there would be fewer vain men in the world, and more honest ones. We may be as really disinterested for ourselves as against ourselves; but as the world is, our candid self esteem may fitly be unexpressed. In the vigor of his life, his abstinence from egotism was exemplary; but when fourscore years had dimmed his perceptions of propriety, he would sometimes *think aloud* concerning his own merits, and express devout gratitude to God for employing so feeble an instrumentality to accomplish so good a work. It was a fault blending with a virtue. He had stood for sixty years at the head of the clergy in his neighborhood; he was seldom visited, except by his acknowledged inferiors; the language in which he was addressed was ordinarily that of deference, and often that of flattery; and who can wonder that, in the decline of life, he would speak too frankly of that excel-

lence which many around him were extolling,* and which he seemed to mention for the sake of ascribing the praise of it to his indulgent Father. When we consider that he had seldom visited the city, to gaze at colossal columns and magnificent palaces which overawe the beholder; that he had lived in a rural solitude, with no high mountain or broad ocean in view, to suggest every hour some nobler theme of conversation than self; that he had seldom mingled in a throng, where he was but one amid thousands who knew nothing and cared nothing about him; that he had not, for a long season, compared himself with equals, but rather with the idolizing friends who almost forgot that the greatest man is never impervious to flattery; we cannot but admire his exemption from the foibles to which his circumstances exposed him. Such men have the strongest incitements to ostentation and hauteur. The vainest and the proudest man is often found at the hermitage. But even in his occasional self praise, there did not seem to be the vanity which some would suspect. It was an impartial and a modest acknowledgment of the distinguishing goodness of Heaven. His tones and his looks were those of a disinterested man *well stricken in years*. An undiscriminating hearer would *look at* the impropriety; but a sharp sighted and true hearted one would *look through* it to the excellence which it concealed.

The following is a specimen of the impartial manner in which this veteran theologian would shoulder his crutch, and show how fields were won. "When I first went as a pupil to Dr. Smalley's, I was full of old Calvinism, and thought I was prepared to meet the Doctor on all the points of his new divinity. For some time all things went on smoothly. At length he began to advance some sentiments which were new to me, and opposed to my former views. I contended with him; but he very quietly tripped me up, and there I was at his mercy. I arose and commenced the struggle anew; but before I was aware of it, I was *floored* again. Thus matters proceeded for some time; he gradually leading me along to the place of light, and I struggling to remain in darkness. He at length succeeded, and I began to see a little light. From that time to the present, the light has been increasing; and I feel assured that the great doctrines of grace which I have preached for fifty years, are in strict accordance with the law and the testimony." "At first I walked on crutches altogether; I thought as others had thought before me; but when the light of New Divinity began to appear, I threw away my crutches, and have gone without them ever since." "My first sermon I esteemed as a

* In an Appendix to the present Lecture are inserted a few letters, which will illustrate the character of the intercourse which Dr. Emmons had with the men of his time.

very good one; but when one or two of my class mates had heard and criticised it, I very tranquilly put it into the fire." "When I was about to be settled in Franklin, some of the neighboring ministers had the impression that I had embraced some heresies. So when they came to examine me for ordination, they tried to draw out my heresies. I answered all their questions promptly; *but if they had only known how*, they would have made me a heretic and never ordained me." How different this style of remark from that of many benefactors of their race who have chosen to proclaim their own merits. "I dare insult mankind," says the great Kepler, "by confessing that I am he who has turned science to advantage. If I am pardoned I shall rejoice; if blamed I shall endure it. The die is cast; I have written this book; and whether it be read by posterity or by my contemporaries is of no consequence. It may well wait for a reader one century, when the Deity during six thousand years has not sent an observer like myself." Said the illustrious Hunter, "When I am dead you will not soon see another John Hunter."

There was one marked peculiarity in Dr. Emmons' conversation on his own religious experience. His advice to a young convert was, "First, maintain a uniform Christian deportment; secondly, never make great pretensions to piety. Those who make great pretensions, too often become like Peter at the Judgment Hall. Their diaries are too often the records of religious vanity." It was with him a philosophical principle to shun the exposure of his religious feelings, except in the society of his intimate friends. His theory of disinterestedness added an influence, in expressing the developement of his inward Christian life. He disliked to represent his own eternal happiness as any thing more than a unit amid innumerable and greater interests; and when, in his ninety-fourth year, he was asked by a distinguished divine, calling on him as a stranger, "How do you feel in view of your speedy entrance into heaven?" He answered, "I feel grateful that if I am not to be saved, others will be." It was as much as to say, "My own eternal happiness is but a drop in the ocean; I choose to talk about the ocean, rather than about the drop." He could converse about himself in the comparison with creatures, but when his relations to the Creator were the theme, he was awed down into a submissive silence.

His disinterestedness was manifested in his afflictions. There are some who are submissive when others suffer; his submission came in the hour of his own trial. There are some who easily acquiesce in the will of Heaven when they hear of strangers in trouble; his acquiescence was at the fitting time.

There are instances which cannot be named, for they let us too far into the sanctuary of his private griefs; but they would show how meekly he bowed under the chastening rod, and how well disciplined he was in the reflection that himself was but a unit, his friends were but units, each having a definite value that was swallowed up in the infinite sum. The following is one example among others more affecting, of his philosophical practice, and his practical philosophy. On the Sabbath after a funeral, he was in the habit of delivering an appropriate sermon; and when there was no reason for believing that the change of worlds had been a happy one, he would preach a judicious but still an *appropriate sermon;* for he moved on a straight line, and unlike modern pastors, he was a man of authority. He did not expressly announce, that there was no hope for the departed, but he spoke with the uncertainty which candor required; and his subject was an alarming admonition to the living not to leave it doubtful whether they were to be saved or lost. His own son, Major Erastus Emmons, at the early age of thirty-three years, died without making a profession of religion; but not without a hope, which he obtained on his death-bed, of receiving the divine favor. Dr. Emmons had often preached on the deceptiveness of a death-bed repentance, and now, in the case of a favorite son, what shall he say? Shall he preach a funeral discourse? Shall he be candid in his allusions to the deceased? With sublimer disinterestedness than that of a Roman father, he closed his sermon on the following Sabbath, with these words. "This subject, and the late instance of mortality, in this place, calls aloud upon those in the midst of their days, to prepare to follow one of their own age into that vast eternity, whither he has gone and never to return. He lived stupid, thoughtless and secure in sin, until he was brought to the very sight of death. He was carried away with the vanity of the world, and the pleasing prospects of living, and abused the calls, the mercies and patience of God; which gave him pain, self condemnation and remorse. He was constrained to say, 'The world, the world has ruined me.' He was brought to give up all his vain hopes and expectations from the world, and to feel the duty and importance of choosing the one thing needful. But whether he did ever heartily renounce the world and choose God for his supreme portion, cannot be known in this world. In his own view, he did become reconciled to God, and derived peace and hope from his supposed reconciliation. But it is more than possible, that like others on a sick bed, he built his hopes upon a sandy foundation. Let his case, however, be what it may, he is dead, and called away from his relatives and friends, just

as he entered the meridian of life. His death, therefore, speaks with an emphasis to parents, brothers and sisters; and especially to those of his own age, to be wiser and better than he was; and not to delay seeking and serving God, to a dying hour. It is not I, but my son, who now preaches to you, whose voice once sounded pleasant in your ears. Be pleased, therefore, to hear his voice from the dead; and prepare to follow him to heaven, if he has been permitted to enter there." A few weeks afterwards, when called to baptize a child who was to bear the name of this lamented son, he lifted up his hand, spoke the word Erastus, — and could proceed no farther; thus evincing that his Christian and parental fidelity was not stoicism. It was his developement in practical life of the disinterestedness which characterized his theory.

In the multitude of illustrations which present themselves, I do not mean to forget the topic which I began to illustrate. This is the influence which Dr. Emmons' character exerted upon his scheme of theology, and his scheme of theology upon his character. His consistency with himself, was another trait of his private life which was transferred to his system of faith. It was commonly said of him, Every one knows where to find him, what he will think of a new measure, how he will treat an old friend. It would be an absurdity for him to appear with a bell-crowned or leghorn hat, to ride in an uncovered carriage, or a worn out chaise. Standing up, or sitting down, at home or abroad, silent or conversing, cheerful or grave, he was just like himself. "He never did that, for that does not sound like him," was good logic with regard to his conduct; and this was his great distinction above other men. He never followed a party, but always meant to follow truth; and when his own denomination were led into any peculiar measures, he went with them or staid behind, just as he was advised by his fixed principles. Hence he was never a partisan. The same rigid self consistency which was seen in his pastoral demeanor, at his books, in his tastes and personal habits, is apparent in his doctrinal speculations. It is rather remarkable, that so many originalities could be so well systematized. They could not have been, save in a mind which moved by clock work.

It is one criterion of a consistent and consecutive reasoner, that the mutual harmony of his theories becomes the more apparent whenever we examine the processes by which he arrived at them, and the peculiar relations which subsisted between them in his own mind. It is always difficult to understand another man's belief, unless we know the history of his mental operations in attaining that belief. We are to consider, that Dr. Emmons formed his theological system while Berke-

leianism retained an influence over our ministers, and while some of them adopted its most obnoxious principles, (as even Dr. Edwards and Dr. West did at one period,) and before he had been fully convinced, by the Scotch philosophers, of the fundamental truths which are involved in the reports of consciousness. His metaphysical theology, then, must be viewed in connection with the principles of mental science which were early instilled into his mind; and had he died as soon as he had made his discoveries in reference to human and divine agency, he would have been extolled, as Bishop Berkeley now is, "for reducing the decisions of our schools to their appropriate results, and doing all for truth that could be done, without revolutionizing the philosophy of his teachers." In common with the wisest of his theological guides, he believed that sensation and consciousness are the source of all our knowledge; that we know nothing of matter save what we perceive by our senses, and nothing of mind save what we are conscious of; that we are conscious of nothing but exercises, operations; that we have no right, therefore, to believe in the existence of any thing spiritual except these exercises; that these are effects, which, like every effect, require a cause; that they must be caused either by a spiritual substance within us, or by an agent without; but of a spiritual substance within us we know nothing; we have no right to positively believe in its existence, for we are not conscious of it; we are conscious of thoughts and feelings only, and therefore have no evidence that there is any spiritual substratum to which they are to be referred. As these exercises comprehend, so far as we know, the whole of our spiritual being, they cannot be considered the effects of any substance within us, the very existence of which we have no right to believe. But they are effects; and what is more appropriate than to ascribe them to Him by whom all things were made, which are made. He did not affirm, as he has been represented by Dr. Dwight and others, that the mind *is* a mere series of exercises, but he refused to affirm that it *is not*. His opinion was, that as we know of nothing spiritual within us, other than these exercises, we have no right to ascribe them to any cause within us. We have no right to found an argument on a principle which we are entirely ignorant of. The maxim of the Chevalier Ramsay was frequently repeated by him, "Never reason from what you do not know." Admit the philosophy of his earlier days, that we have no right to believe in mental existence within us of which we are not conscious, and you must admit his inference, that we have no right to ascribe our moral exercises to any cause within us, but must ascribe them to a cause without, so far as we can give any account of

them. Pursuing this train of reasoning to its ultimatum, we must ascribe these exercises to God, or refuse to assign any cause of them. But some of them are evil; consistency makes no exception. Now we do not say, that Dr. Emmons founded his theory of the origin of evil on the preceding argument, we know that he never gave prominence to it; but we do say, that this train of reasoning prepared the way for his theory; and if it did not induce the belief, prevented him from disbelieving, that God is the efficient cause of all things. It prepared his mind to ascribe the fullest significancy to those scriptures which represent the wicked as the axe and the saw in the hand of the Deity. It compelled him to reject a belief in the efficiency of a substance within us, and therefore to repudiate the popular theory. Though he seldom alludes to the notion of the schools which has just been described, he was the only divine who made a consistent use of it. It exerted a secret influence over his reasonings, and it ought to do so, or else to be discarded. A consistent mind will be directed by its philosophical maxims, as a ship is turned by the rudder. The rudder may be very small, and may be entirely out of sight, yet it has a real operation; and the secrecy of the cause often increases, rather than diminishes the effect.

At the present day, some theologians assert that there are no second causes; that the laws of nature are nothing but the Divine agency; that a physical cause is a mere antecedent, and is not, strictly, a cause, as it exerts no power; and therefore it is God who immediately sends the drops of rain to the earth, and causes the winds to blow. But these theologians, when they account for moral evil, seem to forget their denial of actual efficiency in physical antecedents; they speak of the mind as producing its evil exercises, although they have previously discarded all causation in created nature. Dr. Emmons applied the same principle to matter and to spirit; to good and to evil. If the divines just alluded to are correct in their premises, he is correct in his inference. If he is wrong in his conclusion, they are wrong in their principles. If Dugald Stewart has a right to say, as he does say, that we cannot determine whether physical causes be, in themselves, efficient; then philosophy leaves us incapable of deciding that there can be any other cause of sin, than the great Cause of all things.

The main arguments of Dr. Emmons in advocating the Divine causation of sin, indeed, the only arguments which he expressly mentions, are, first, the nature of God's volition, secondly, the assertions of the Bible. In the latter, he displayed his self consistency, as some other divines do not. They insist that we shall adopt the manner as well as the matter of the

inspired penmen; that we must speak in the style, as well as believe the doctrines, of the Bible. But when they come to such expressions as, "Whom he will, he hardeneth," they wind round and round in a circle, as if to hide themselves in some corner of it. Dr. Emmons read, "I make peace, and create evil," and he therefore adopted the phraseology, "God creates sinful volitions." "This," he remarked, "is both the matter and the manner of the Bible. I use the phrase, God creates evil, because the Bible uses it. The difference between my opposers and me, is this: I use the inspired language; they do n't." He used to speak of a minister who took for his text, "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart," and who affirmed, for the proposition of his discourse, that the Lord did not harden Pharaoh's heart; and on leaving the church, was asked, "which his hearers must believe, his sermon, or his text?" Having adopted the principle of imitating minutely the inspired style, Dr. Emmons could no more shrink from declaring the agency of God in the production of evil, than, in his own words, he "could refuse to say B after he had said A." It is gratifying to perceive, that his opponents have loved to admit his consistency with himself. Says one of them, "His reasoning is straight forward, logical, and conclusive. Give him his premises, and you cannot resist his conclusions." Said another, "I do not believe his doctrine, but I admire his logic. Start with him, and you go with him." Dr. Ware of Cambridge says, he is "one of the ablest, and clearest, and most consistent writers, that has appeared on the side of Orthodoxy."

Another source of the interest felt in Dr. Emmons was his independence, originality, ingenuity, and comprehensiveness of mind. It was needful that he should be independent, else he would not have exposed his original views. Few men have had a more extended system of originalities, on matters secular and sacred, small or great. Not only in his thoughts was he original, but in his feelings also. He felt, not because others did, not because men had taught him that he should feel, but because he felt spontaneously, as himself, for himself. His sermon on the dignity of human nature gave an early indication of his tendency to walk in no other man's footsteps; and his speculations on Sabbath schools, church music, church polity and policy, even on the propriety of closing a prayer with the word Amen, on the fall, the atonement, and regeneration, on reprobation, the conscience, the will, the existence of other intelligent creatures beside men and angels, indeed on all subjects, have that exciting influence which ever flow from original thoughts, be they correct or incorrect. An

original writer is always more stimulating, and therefore more profitable to the mind, than a compiler, even though the compiler be an eclectic of the truth, and nothing but the truth. The compiler makes the mind a passive recipient of others' thoughts. The true thinker makes the mind work its own way into the truth; and when one has "come to the light," he sees more clearly than when he is brought there. There is a freshness, a vitality, a sympathy in the writings of one who elaborates his own theories, which is a great excellence, superadded to any merit in the theories themselves. It was hence a favorite remark of Dr. Emmons, "Retail geniuses are worth nothing. Go to the wholesale merchants, if you wish to buy knowledge."*

For the successful use of original talent, ingenuity is essential; and for ingenuity the subject of this notice has been long distinguished. It gave an absorbing interest to his conversation, especially when his favorite science was the topic, and he was conversing with unbelievers or disbelievers of his system. Though he seldom adopted the irony of the Socratic method, he often resorted to its interrogative style, and would soon involve an unwary disputant in self contradictions. It was the ingenuity of logic, not of cunning; it was a philosophical skill, not the trickery of a quibbler, which he displayed. The following are some of his pithy questions with the answers which followed them.

"Do you believe that God is the efficient cause of sin?" "No," was the reply. "Do you believe that sin takes place according to the usual laws of nature?" "Yes." "What are the laws of nature according to Newton?" "They are the established modes of the divine operation." "Do you approve of that definition?" "Yes." "Put those things together." Dr. Emmons was always satisfied, if a man would adopt the common definition of the laws of nature and would believe that sin takes place according to these laws. Again, he once asked a teacher of theology, "Do you believe that God is the efficient cause of sin?" "No." "Do you believe that he created the world by his mere volition; that he willed, and it was done?" "Yes." "Do you believe that his will is creative; that he has only to put forth a volition for an event, and the event takes place?" "Yes." "Do you believe that on the whole he willed sin to exist?" "Yes." "Was not his will creative then?" Pause.—"Is there any more harm in causing a thing

* In many respects Dr. Emmons may be called a self made man. He formed his style of writing, for example, for himself, before he had ever studied a book of rhetoric. He derived more aid from a few of his class-mate Trumbull's remarks in criticising his composition, than he ever derived from rhetorical works. Before he read those works, he had learned their contents by his own observation.

to be, than in willing it to be?" Pause.—"My theory is, that God causes moral evil in the act of willing it; and you believe that he performs that act. If it be wrong to cause the evil, it is wrong to will it. I believe that he caused it in no sense morally different from that in which you believe he willed it. Where then is the great discrepancy between you and me?" "In what," he was once asked by a disciple of Dr. Burton, "does sin consist?" "Sinning," was the reply; and perhaps there cannot be a more ingenious compression of the "exercise scheme" into one word.

No one can read the doctrinal sermons which he published in the earlier years of his life, without seeing his ingenuity in the divisions and inferences. Hence the intellectual interest which his sermons awakened. Few speakers have had better success in chaining the attention of educated men. Said one of the first scholars in our land, "I heard him preach in a New England city, after he had passed his threescore years and ten, and when he had announced his subject, the foreknowledge of God, some of the hearers rose and left the house; not caring to hear a metaphysical disquisition from an old man, who held his manuscript before his face, and read it in a low monotone. The more intelligent auditors, however, remained; and as they saw one truth educed from another, they became curious to see the whole thread unravelled; and many leaned forward in their pews eager to catch every intonation of his still small voice. It was the eloquence of reason. It was true, intellectual eloquence, compared with which all florid declamation is contemptible."

"More than thirty years ago," says one who holds a high station in the church, "I passed a Sabbath in Franklin, partly for the purpose of hearing Dr. Emmons in his own pulpit. He took for his text, 'Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord,' and educed from it the proposition, 'Men are more merciful to their enemies than God is to his.' From the beginning to the end of his two discourses on this theme, the whole congregation were increasingly intent; first, to see what doctrine would come from such a text, for all knew that some doctrine would come, of course; then, after the thrill occasioned by so startling a paradox, to see how the preacher would solve the enigma and unfold the truths it enveloped, and finally, to imbibe the rich treasures of practical wisdom which were successively introduced and solemnly enforced in what was called the *Improvement*. I was abundantly rewarded for my Sabbath day's sojourn in that quiet town. I felt an emotion of the moral sublime, when I saw one old man after another, who had grown gray under the patriarch's ministrations, bending forward in breathless si-

lence, rising at length from their seats, and gazing with eagerness to catch every word that fell from the lips of their teacher. The several parts of the discourses were kept so distinct, were arranged with so much skill, and announced in so uncompromising a style, that curiosity was kept on the alert, to see what would come next; and we all looked forward with growing interest for the catastrophe of the whole plan."

In reference to his skill in eliciting the hidden treasures from a doctrine, the following comparison was made between him and Rev. David Sanford, one of the most eminent preachers of his time, a brother-in-law of Hopkins, and an intimate friend of Emmons. "Mr. Sanford is like a surgeon who comes before the patient, and parades all his instruments, explains their mechanism, and describes their operation;—this is the knife for dividing the muscles, this the saw for clearing the bone, this the forceps for grasping the arteries, this the ligament for tying them;—and then he amputates the limb. But Dr. Emmons is like a surgeon who says nothing of any instrument, but, before the patient knows what is going on, the limb is off." He was very fond of a sudden disclosure of his plan, of making the practical application startle and confound the hearer. His practice was to write the body of his discourse for the morning, and to extemporize on the inferences in the afternoon; and after he had laid an ingenious train of argument, he would raise his spectacles, lay down his notes, and often in showing the finale of his reasonings would be wrought up to the most subduing eloquence. The last time I ever heard him preach, he descended to a style of remark unusually familiar for one who preserved so high a sense of ministerial dignity. He had applied the *reductio ad absurdum* to various pleas of the impenitent, and then surprised them with the following abrupt conclusion: "Now here you are, here you are, in a corner. How can you get away? Not to the right, for that is hedged up. Nor to the left, for *that* is hedged up. You are in a corner. Will you try to escape? You can't, you can't escape. You must yield," etc. After he had thus cornered his opponents, he was truly powerful; not with the physical properties of an orator, for he had but little of outward eloquence, but with the force of a mind conscious of a previous triumph in argument, and stirred to the depths of his spirit with pious feeling.

His ingenuity qualified him to take comprehensive views of truth. He was conscious of sufficient skill to reconcile apparent discrepancies in doctrine. After he had exhibited one relation of a theory, he did not fear to exhibit a different relation, but he loved to present all the aspects of truth, and to preserve them from mutual repugnancy. If he taught the moral

impotence of sinners, he would also teach, more fully than his predecessors, that all men had an amount of power commensurate with their obligations. If he taught God's universal agency, he would also teach man's activity. If the Holy Ghost is the author of regeneration, man is the actor of it. Indeed, in every department of theology, he aimed at comprehensive views, and was not afraid of seeming paradoxes. By his ingenious explanation of these paradoxes, he disciplined the minds of his hearers, held out one truth before them in the light of another, and made them inquisitive to know all the connections of apparently isolated truths. It has been said, that every great man will contradict himself. The import of this saying is, that while a narrow mind will adopt one view of truth, and exclude every other, a capacious mind will embrace all sides of a doctrine, and combine into one great whole, seemingly discordant parts. Hence, the community will vary in their judgments concerning a comprehensive divine. Some will refer him to this party, some to that, according as they discern this or that relation of his extensive system. Of no modern theologian, perhaps, have there been formed more conflicting estimates than of Dr. Emmons. Some have censured him for too great a love of novelty; others for too pertinacious an adherence to antiquated forms. Some have commended the simplicity of his views; others have disliked their complexity. Some have considered him as exalting philosophy above the Bible; others, as too fond of distorting scientific truth into an agreement with inspiration. One has been pleased with the rationalistic tendencies of his system; because this system dispenses with a supernatural interposition of God in the renewal of sinners, and in a revival of religion, and teaches that man is no more dependent for a new heart, than for a new thought, or for another breath. Another is pleased with the 'theocratical' tendencies of the same system; because it refers all effects to the Being, "of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things." Many have considered him deficient in the imaginative element of a philosopher, too empirical, plodding continuously over one low plain. Others have considered him too visionary; and one of our theological Reviews has classed him with German transcendentalists, and ranged side by side the names of Hegel and Emmons. Thus do men divide a great mind among different parties, giving to each a due proportion, and implying that the excellences of each may be gathered into one comprehensive spirit. In a letter written when he was ninety-three years old, he says: "I go with the Old School of New England divines half way, and then turn round and oppose them with all my might. I go with the New School half way, and then turn

round and oppose them with all my might. The Old School must say less of passivity, the New School more of dependence." He once remarked in conversation, "I never could see how some persons could so manage as to be claimed on so many different and opposite sides. Why, I was never claimed only on one side, and hardly on that." This remark is both true and untrue. As a whole, his system differs from every other; but in each of its branches it coalesces with some other, and has either the merit or the fault of blending into one whole, qualities which had previously been separate.

Another source of the interest felt in Dr. Emmons, was the elevation of his religious character. His views of divine truth were so comprehensive, he had been for so long a period so familiar with the more sublime, severe, and subduing doctrines, that he exhibited a rare example of philosophical Christianity; of deep, strong emotion flowing from stern and manly thought. He prayed in his family and conversed on practical godliness, like a forgiven penitent, who trembled before his Sovereign, and remembered, that as God was in heaven and he on earth, therefore should his words be few. He dreaded the semblance of religious ostentation; and no one more carefully or more conscientiously recoiled from it. Though he avoided secrecy in most things, he courted it for his good deeds. He was a living realization of the proverbs, "feeling is mute when deepest," "shallow streams are the noisiest." His countenance, his tones, his words were the sure signs of deep calling unto deep in the recesses of his spirit. There was often a sublimity in his subdued pathos, in the monosyllabic declarations of his faith and submissiveness. After having lived the life of a self scrutinizing and self suspecting christian for seventy years, having been far more conversant than the majority of our best men, with those awe inspiring themes, Sovereignty, Decrees, Reprobation, Justice, Eternal Penalty, Disinterested Submission, he was at length told that his end drew near, and he must soon stand in the presence of his Judge. "I am ready," was his reply; and to those who knew him, he could not have uttered more consoling, more satisfying words. They were the index of his decided, matured, considerate hope; a hope formed under the influence, not of the promises merely, but of the threatenings also; not solely of God's forbearance, but also of his inflexible rectitude. It was the hope of a man looking to the cross indeed, but also to the august and pure throne, of one who had exalted the gospel, and magnified the law. Had he been less rigid and unbending in his enforcement of the stern precepts which come

from Sinai, less cautious and reverent in his exposure of those religious feelings that are almost too sacred to be exposed, the three words, "I am ready," had not been so full of meaning; but now they were the history of the man, of his past fears, his present hopes. He measured his syllables, and shrunk back from the least parade of piety. And if, after the application of his rigid tests, he dared to express a hope, even a trembling hope, of receiving a welcome to paradise, we instinctively repose a steadier confidence in that hope, than if it had not passed through so protracted and fiery a trial.

In his views of self crucifixion before God, he reminded one of the Archbishop of Cambray. Fenelon was born indeed under sunnier skies than Emmons, and lived in a more polished society. But there was a striking resemblance between the tendencies of the two men to exalt Jehovah, and annihilate self; to look upon eternal happiness as a small good in the comparison with virtue, and eternal misery as a small evil in comparison with sin. When the opposers of Dr. Emmons have indulged in asperity of remark with regard to his willingness to be lost for the glory of God, they have borrowed the style, and perhaps too the spirit, in which Bossuet and his adherents aspersed the disinterested love of Fenelon; and the following remark of the Pope, in his attempt to compound the matter and avoid an immediate decision against Fenelon, will apply, with some modification, to Emmons, and those who have ridiculed him for his theory of disinterestedness: "The Bishop of Cambray loves his Maker too much, his opposers love their neighbor too little." This willingness to abandon every selfish good for the well being of the universe, was not, with Dr. Emmons, so much a theory as a principle, not a principle so much as a life. The impression which he made upon his pupils in this regard, may be described in the words of Dr. Channing, as he pays the following tribute to the memory of one of Dr. Emmons' friends. "The system of Dr. Hopkins," he says, "however fearful, was yet built on a generous foundation. Other Calvinists were willing that their neighbors should be predestinated to eternal misery for the glory of God. This noble minded man demanded a more generous and impartial virtue; and maintained that we should consent to our own perdition, should be willing ourselves to be condemned, if the greatest good of the universe, and the manifestation of the divine perfections should so require. True virtue, as he taught, was an entire surrender of personal interest to the benevolent purposes of God. Self love he spared in none of its movements. He called us to seek our own happiness, as well as that of others,

in a spirit of impartial benevolence; to do good to ourselves, not from self preference, not from the impulse of personal desires, but in obedience to that sublime law which requires us to promote the welfare of each and all within our influence. I need not be ashamed to confess the deep impression which this system made on my youthful mind. I am grateful to this stern teacher for turning my thoughts and heart to the claims and majesty of impartial, universal benevolence." *

Though a submissive veneration was the most obvious feature in the religious developements of Dr. Emmons, he would sometimes converse on the heavenly state with the familiarity of one whose thoughts found their home in the skies, and with the artlessness of one who did not query with himself how his thoughts would appear if made known to the world. "I have no doubt," he once remarked, "that spirits will know each other in the coming life. I shall see brother Spring, and Mr. Sanford, and how many inquiries shall we have to make of each other! † It will be pleasant to see and converse with Adam and Noah, and the patriarchs; but I think I shall be as anxious to be introduced to the apostle Paul, and Martin Luther, as to any one who has gone there before me." The writer of this sketch will never lose the impression made upon him by Dr. Emmons, when, at the age of ninety-four, he spoke of his decease, which he must speedily accomplish; and said with a child-like diffidence, with the simplicity of a great man, "I confess that I look forward with interest to the time when I shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. I have a great curiosity to look upon David and Isaiah; and I long to talk with Paul. Paul was a wonderful man. But especially will Jesus Christ and God fill my thoughts. I do not know, however, that I shall be saved. If another man should be the subject of all my exercises, I think I should have a hope of *him*. But it is a great thing to be allowed to enter heaven. Perhaps I shall be shut out. But if I am *not* saved, I shall be *disappointed*." The semi-tone with which this last word was uttered, the rigid pressure of his lips, and the long pause that followed it, bespoke at once the humility, faith, and submission which he had cherished in his bosom, as a jewel too precious for the promiscuous

* Discourse delivered at the Dedication of the Unitarian Congregational Church in Newport, R. I., July 27, 1836. By William Ellery Channing. p. 37.

† He here refers to his brother-in-law, Rev. Dr. Spring of Newburyport, and to his early friend, previously alluded to, Rev. David Sanford of Medway, Mass. "When Dr. Spring died," he once remarked, "I felt as if I had lost my right hand. We thought together, felt together, acted together." They were intimately associated in the measures which led to the establishment of Andover Theological Seminary, in the conduct of the Missionary Magazine, and in various benevolent societies.

gaze. I left him a few moments afterward, with the profoundest reverence for his piety, and I never saw him more. There was something in his silence, — in what he *did not say*, except with his significant eye, — that beggars description. He was so peculiar that "we ne'er shall see his like again;" so good, that we shall seldom find his equal.

Another source of the interest felt in Dr. Emmons was, the tenacity of his physical and mental system. In several distinct applications of the term, tenacity was a prominent characteristic of his body and his soul. It marked his predilections for men and things. He was a fast friend; a steadfast advocate of the truth. The power of long continued attention raised him above common men. It may be said of him as he said of another, "He could look half an hour at the point of a needle, without moving an eye lid." Long after others had let go their hold of an argument, or of a specific phraseology, he would hold on and hold out, and keep hold, and never let go. Possessing an athletic and well compacted frame, a bilious nervous temperament, he was formed for protracted labor, and an old age tenacious of health and energy. Only three days before his death, he made a remark which, for sprightliness and shrewdness, savored of the flower of his life. In his eighty-third year, he relinquished his pastoral office, because he had magnanimously resolved to cease preaching, "while he had mind enough left to know that he had begun to fail." He supposed himself to have declined at this age, not in his ability to wield the pen of a ready writer, but in his freedom and power of extemporaneous remark. Still, after his retirement from office, he made one unwritten address, which was generally considered the happiest and most effective that ever came from him.

Some of his former parish, perceiving that their parochial guide had abandoned his authority, and feeling disposed to taste the sweets of freedom, made an attempt to introduce Universalist preachers into the old pulpit. The parish were called together to act upon a petition for opening their meeting-house occasionally to other denominations; no particular sect being alluded to, but the Universalists being intended. Some of the Doctor's friends deemed it advisable to grant the petition, and hoped that a conciliating course would preclude a threatened schism. But he was inflexible. He said but little, and did nothing until the parish bell rung for the meeting. Then he called for his horse and chaise, calculated knowingly for the time spent in the preliminaries of business, and when he supposed them ready to introduce the main topic, he rode to the

meeting-house door, and with a quick and firm step walked to his pew. He took the parish by surprise. They had been looking for some other things, but not for this. The three-cornered hat, they all supposed, had been hung up, and this sudden re-appearance of it was like a resurrection from the grave. A highly intelligent citizen was speaking at the moment, in favor of indulging the petitioners; but when he saw the veteran pastor enter the house, he sat down. A death-like stillness ensued. The sight of the octogenarian, at a business meeting of the parish, was so novel, that nobody could tell what was to come. Having asked, "What is the question now before the meeting?" the Doctor arose, and spoke for half an hour with uncommon sprightliness; exposed the absurdity of opening the house on the Sabbath for truth, and during the week for error; of building up one day, what is to be torn down the next; of weaving a web in the morning, and unravelling it at night. "This," he said, "is not what you have been taught. It is in the face of what you have heard for the last fifty years." He closed his speech with a keen and sarcastic address to that "respectable class of persons called Universalists." The petitioners looked at each other; feeling somewhat like the Indians at Hadley, when discomfited by the old regicide who suddenly presented himself as if from another world. As he was wont in his speeches, the Doctor stopped when he had done. Not a sentence was spoken afterward, except to take the vote, and this was nearly unanimous against the petitioners. The meeting-house of that large society was never requested before or since for any heretical movement. The territorial parish remained, until the Doctor's death, undivided, and in this respect a commendable anomaly in that whole region; and those who had favored a mitigation of the Doctor's strict regime, united in the general testimony, that his master-piece of eloquence was in a forensic meeting, when he was about eighty-three years old; and after he had retired from the pulpit through fear, on his own part, of failing in his extemporaneous performances.*

In describing his tenaciousness of mental vigor, there is need of some qualification. Between the ages of eighty

* It is an interesting fact, which may deserve a mention here, that not only did his parish remain entire, but his meeting-house remained unaltered until his death. The high pulpit, and the old square pews were not removed while he lived. His funeral was the last religious service performed in the house before it was modernized. The day of his death had been appointed for the commencement of essential repairs upon the edifice, but in consequence of that event they were deferred; and the dismantling of the church did not begin until the day after the interment of the patriarch. It was fitting that so long as he lived, all things should remain as they were aforetime.

and ninety, he retained so much of his acuteness that some did not perceive the least waning of his mind; and the sayings of his last years have been reported, as an accurate development of his pristine manhood. This is a mistake and a misfortune. It is a mistake; for with all his retentiveness of the excellence which he once possessed, he was correct in thinking that he did not retain the whole.* Miracle if he did. It is a misfortune; for he preserved so much character as to invest the weakness of his last fifteen years with the authority of his earlier life. On the one hand, it is to his honor that he so far retained the stamina of his constitution as to be regarded a man, long after others, of equal age, had been given over to a second childhood. On the other hand, it is an injury to his fame, that some of his friends have eulogized him, and some of his opposers have censured him, for remarks which he made when he had outlived, by a quarter of a century, the period prescribed for mental soundness; remarks which not *he* made, but the weakness that began to dwell in him; a weakness, however, disclosing itself so seldom as not to be recognized for a sign of decay. Had he died at the venerable age of eighty, he would have exhibited fewer defects to be associated with his former greatness, and to derive sanction from the excellences which accompanied them. It is a poor logic, that infers a charge against the prudence of a man from some indiscretions, that escape him at a time when the conduct of most men is too silly for even the notice of this poor logic. That a living man is thought worthy of serious criticism by his contemporaries of the fourth generation, is a proof that he has not gone so far beyond his maturity, as they have come short of theirs. He was superannuated, in some respects, during the last fifteen years of his life; but not so unworthy of our regard as those who have injured his name by exposing the foibles of his hoary age. In his own words, "Young men think old men to be fools, but it were well for young men to remember the latter clause of the proverb."

Another source of the interest felt in Dr. Emmons, was the fact of his standing as the representative of choice men among the ancient clergy of New England. He often spoke of himself as being left alone, all the old familiar faces long since vailed from his view. There has ever been a melancholy and sombre interest flung over such a man, staying so long behind his time, and watching over the fourth generation of his successors. He

* Speaking of his forgetfulness toward the close of his life, he was wont to say in a mournful tone, "My mind is just like a sieve. It takes in a great deal, but all that is valuable runs through."

has been likened to the bird that lingers in a northern hemisphere, long after its companions have sought a more genial clime; to the soldier compelled to slacken his movements, and loiter alone in the land of the enemy; when his comrades have marched through, cheered with the sound of the bugle and the society of a full band, in the hope of soon regaining their home and enjoying their laurels. He has been compared, by an ancient poet, to the oak that stands solitary, after the surrounding forest has been hewn down, and that stretches out its stiffened arms, as if to implore mercy from the winds and the storm.

In order to form the right estimate of Dr. Emmons, we must regard him as belonging to a former age; as a recent man, but not so recent a theologian. We may do him wrong if we measure his attainments by the standard of modern scholarship. We may find some passages from his pen which are inconsistent with this standard. So are some passages in the works of all his contemporaries. There are witlings who sneer at Lord Bacon for his ignorance of many truths which are now taught at the infant school. But the child who can do, at the present day, what a giant could not do in days of old, is still a child, and may never become a giant. If we look at Emmons's sermons for the learned exegesis which we may find in a German commentary, we shall look for what he undervalued, and for what his proper contemporaries had never heard of. He had established his principles, "he had published a book," before the clergy of New England were initiated into the modern science of criticism; and whoever expects that a man of seventy years will remodel his creed and look out for *shevas* and *dagheshes* at the opening of a new era in sacred literature, can never have heard of Dr. Sangrado, who "had published his book," and never have studied the apothegm of Dr. Emmons, "Few men will make much change for the better, after they are forty years old." It is rare praise which is rendered to John Knox, that he began his study of the Hebrew when he was fifty years of age. In judging of character, it is the perfection of wisdom to distinguish intrinsic merit from adscititious accomplishments. Is one of the soundest of our divines to lose our confidence because he was deficient in one species of learning? Dr. Emmons knew exactly as much of Hebrew as Augustine ever learned, and would by no means suffer in comparison with Richard Baxter, of whom we read, "Of Hebrew he scarcely knew any thing; his acquaintance with Greek was not profound; and even in Latin, as his works show, he must be regarded, by a scholar, as little better than a barbarian." What if we find as many exegetical errors in Emmons's works, as we may find scientific ones in Bacon's? He was, in this regard, not far behind the

chiefest of the apostles of his day. What if his views of the stellary system were less sublime than those of Chalmers? They were the same views which Bellamy, West, and others had sanctioned. It is as well, perhaps, to have the sterling sense of our fathers without the apparatus of modern science, as it is to have this apparatus without their sense.

Dr. Emmons studied theology with the father of Dr. Strong, of Hartford; and Dr. Strong himself we revere, as one of the patriarchs. The son-in-law of Dr. Bellamy preached at Emmons's ordination. Dr. Hopkins, who was intimate with President Edwards, was also intimate with the subject of these remarks. Dr. Lyman, Dr. Wales, Gov. Treadwell, and Judge Trumbull, were his class-mates at college, and his juniors in age. With Trumbull he was particularly intimate, and held him in his lap when, at the age of seven or eight, the author of M'Fingal passed a satisfactory examination on the studies required for admission to college. He used to say of Dr. Dwight, whom we always associate with greatness, "I have many and many a time dandled him on my knee. When I was at Yale, I used to take him up in my arms. He was a very pretty boy." Dr. Emmons preserved an outward resemblance to some of our old divines. He wore, to the last, the antique dress; he preserved the ancient pronunciation. Like them he disdained the graces of oratory. They would sometimes read their sermons of a winter's day, in an unwarmed church, with their cloaks on, even with mittens on, with their note-cases lifted up so as to conceal their eyes from the audience; but still the audience gave earnest heed to the things which were spoken. He was of the same class. They were precise and punctilious in their habits. Dr. Edwards, when a boy, felt obliged to leave his shoes in a particular place over night; and when once, by accident, he forgot this duty, he left his bed and rectified the disorder. Dr. Hopkins could not sleep unless he knew precisely where his gloves were. So there was not an article in Dr. Emmons's room but he could find it in the dark. They were regular in their movements. Dr. West would come home from Hartford on the Saturday of election week, not Friday but Saturday, and would turn the corner to go up from the plain to the hill where he lived, at half after ten o'clock in the morning. For the winding up of his watch he had his fixed time. It was interesting to see the exactness of Dr. Emmons. That noonmark at his window; if he did not look at it, watch in hand, every bright day, at about the right time, it was because something wonderful had happened. Dr. West studied in one place, had certain regular movements in his study chair, left two cavities as the impress of his feet upon the floor. No one could

look about in Dr. Emmons's room, without knowing where his feet usually rested; the marks which they left upon the wainscot attracted so much attention from visiters, that he was obliged to procure a new panelling for one place in his room, which would suggest fewer queries. He sat in the same study chair more than half a century, and when, about ninety years of age, he relaxed the severity of his mental toil, he fitly consented to abandon the old arm-chair for a new and easier one. Being asked, before this epoch, but after he was released from parochial duties, why he did not spend his leisure days in journeying, he replied, "I should like well enough to travel, if I could take my study with me. Habits are stubborn things; and I have become so accustomed to this room, to this desk, to this chair, and to this spot where I sit, that I do not feel at home any where else; I cannot talk any where else." He had a regular hour for conversation with his students and friends; and a peculiar movement of his body toward the study table was equal to a sheriff's order that the room should be cleared, and he be left alone.

The clergy of New England tasked themselves as if they were of antediluvian mould. We read of the two Edwardses, Hopkins, Smalley, Stiles, Chauncy and Dwight, as at their books, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and sometimes eighteen hours of the day. Dr. Emmons, in this respect, equalled any of them. He had his study, not like Bishop Berkley, in his cellar, but on his lower floor, so that his family might easily preserve a comfortable temperature in his room, if he should ever be called out. "By this means," he said, "I have saved much time." Many of the old divines left their domestic concerns to others, and intermeddled not with the minor cares of life. Neither President Edwards nor Dr. Emmons understood very well, the topography of their barns. The former could not distinguish his own domestic animals from those of his neighbor. The latter rode home from Boston, after the State election, without noticing that he was carried by another man's horse. "If I had heard," said one of his intimate friends, "that he had broken into a book-store, and brought home its contents, I might have thought it probable; but as to this unministerial kind of theft, I *cannot* believe it." He did, however, take a general superintendence of his farm, all of which he could survey from his house, and the directions for its management he daily issued from his study; and when he had ceased his ministry, and, in his own words, "had nothing else to do," he began to write in albums for his friends, to cultivate a more particular acquaintance with the affairs of common life, and to perform certain services for his household and his guests,

which, in his hale manhood, he would not condescend to, "no, not for king George."*

The ministers of New England were not so remarkable for reading many volumes, as for reading thoroughly and well. They adopted for their motto, "*non multa sed multum.*" They followed the advice of Luther, that those who study in what art soever, "should betake themselves to the reading of some sure and certain sorts of books oftentimes over and over again; for to read many sorts of books produceth more and rather confusion, than to learn thereout any thing certainly or perfectly, like as those that dwell every where, and remain certainly in no-place, such do well no where nor are any where at home." "Beware of the man of one book," was in good measure applicable to the New England divines. Cotton Mather's library contained about two thousand volumes. President Edwards' did not contain more than a quarter of that number. His son's contained about half of it. Yet many of their books were folios or quartos. They were such as Poole, Witsius, Calvin, Grotius. They read the books of their opponents, of infidels, and acquired a mastery in reasoning, by their contests with the acutest dialecticians in the language. The books which they read they studied. The leaves of such as are preserved are thumbed and dog-eared. Dr. Emmons read more than the majority of New England divines, and with more critical acumen. The neat marks which he made upon the margin indicate the discrimination, and the sharp-sightedness, that let not the slightest hint escape him. The worst books, he used to say, are the best; they compel us to think.

These divines lived abstemiously. President Edwards would leave the table for his study before his family had concluded their repast, and would return when they had satisfied their wants, to dismiss the table. "Through life I have risen from my meals with as good an appetite as I had when I sat down," was the remark of Dr. Emmons when he had passed his eightieth year. These divines neglected physical exercise. Of a summer's day the subject of this notice would take a walk of about half a mile, after dinner; not for the sake of mere exercise, but for a more intellectual object. All that a visiter would notice was, that he rose early in the morning, read his Bible, and meditated until the breakfast table was brought into his room; walked from his study chair to his repast, afterwards back to his chair; moved again when the dining

* The natural versatility of Dr. Emmons's mind was manifest in accommodating himself to his circumstances, and in changing his established habits when he had resigned his pastoral office. Few men, at his age, would have consented to so many alterations in their mode of life.

table was spread for him, consulted his noon mark, returned in due season to his chosen seat; repeated these journeyings for the evening meal, and before ten o'clock retired to his repose. This seemed to be, and for successive weeks it often was, nearly all the muscular exertion made by one who lived nearly a hundred years. Both he and his fathers in the ministry were formed for long life. They were so regular in their habits, so free from the excitements to which the clergy are now exposed, and held so tense a rein over their passions, that they could not waste away and consume themselves as their successors do. Mr. Stoddard, of Northampton, died at eighty-six; Dr. Increase Mather at eighty-four; Dr. Cotton Mather at sixty-five; Dr. Stiles at sixty-eight; Dr. Johnson at seventy-six; Dr. Hopkins at eighty-three; Dr. Bellamy at seventy-two; Dr. Hart at sixty-nine; President Chauncy, of Harvard College, and Dr. Chauncy, of Boston, at eighty-two; Dr. Smalley at eighty-six; Dr. West at eighty-four; Dr. Strong at sixty-eight; Dr. Lothrop at ninety. In assigning the reasons for their longevity, we are not to forget their cheerfulness. Their portraits indicate a most unearthly gloom, but these portraits are not correct. They were executed by unskilful artists, and the clergymen, as they sat for their likenesses, tried so hard to look naturally, that their pictures indicate only their concern and sorrow at their want of success. Their character, too, in its completeness, was never yet delineated on the printed page. Hopkins' autobiography is little better than his confession of sin and frailness. His life of Edwards would have been more comprehensive, if he had once learned to write out the sprightliness and kindly emotions which endeared him to his friends, but which now lie buried under his uncouth and smothering style. He was a true man, albeit the world know him not. It is on the record of private history, that neither he nor his associates were cast in that iron mould in which they have often been caricatured. When the ministers of Great Barrington and Bethlem, and New Marlborough, rode over to the old study at Stockbridge, there was as much of the *vis medicatrix* of good humor in their intercourse, as was necessary for the rejuvenescence of the physical system. "I do not ascribe my long continued health," said Dr. Emmons, "to any whimsical care of my diet; what has hurt me, I have not eaten. I have avoided stimulating liquids, have seldom drank coffee unless it were half milk and half sugar, have been always temperate in the use of simple food, and have secured good sleep." But his temperance was a general virtue, extending to all his appetites and passions; his securing good sleep was but one index of his character; of his calmness, patience, resignation,

freedom from exposure both physical and moral, his spirit reclining on the bosom of eternal truth, while he rested his head upon his pillow.

But he has gone; numbered at last with the friends of his youth, allowed to rejoin the company from which he had been severed so long. The last of our patriarchs has left us; and men whom he baptized in infancy wept at his funeral when they had well nigh reached their seventieth year. "Nothing was more affecting to me," said one who witnessed his obsequies, "than to see those old men weeping over the corpse of their father." There is a melancholy interest thrown over the places which have been distinguished as the residence of our ablest divines. Most of them are rural villages, where the stillness of the Sabbath reigns from day to day, and where but few relics remain of the greatness that has left them. Formerly they were the seats of the oracle. Northampton, Stockbridge, Bethlem, Great Barrington, Colebrook, Berlin, Franklin, once gave law to the ministry of New England. The voice which went out from these retired villages was heard and obeyed in our own land and in Britain. Genius, and learning, and piety, flocked to them, and they became the schools of the prophets. But now, although the absolute importance of these places has increased, their relative influence over the church is diminished.* The sceptre has departed from these churches, and the law-giver from among them. Bethlem is one of the least among the princes of Judah. Though once familiar to every child, its name is scarcely visible upon the recent map; and the pulpit of its first minister, the first New England divine who received a doctorate from Britain, is stored in the loft of a barn. These places have not fallen, so much as others have risen; and towns which acquired their celebrity from the names of their clergymen, are left to depend on their intrinsic worth. Where commerce attracts the merchant, or some well endowed seminary invites the scholar, or where Nature has lavished her charms with unwonted luxuriance, thither do our intellectual masters resort, and there is the voice of law. The shades under which our youthful clergy reclined to meditate on the wise lessons of their teachers, and the streams beside which they roamed, are now deserted by the scholar; and grass has grown up in the paths once trod by the masters in our Israel. There is only one gathering place of the great and good which shall never be left desolate; only the shade of the tree of life shall be always refreshing; only the stream from the fountain of life shall flow on without end.

* Within a circle of four miles from the birth place of Dr. Emmons, were born David Brainerd, Dr. Griffin, Dr. Nott, James Brainerd Taylor, and others of honored memory.

APPENDIX TO THE PRECEDING.

As illustrating the deference which was formerly paid to the clergy of New England, and particularly to Dr. Emmons, the following letters are inserted from Gov. Treadwell of Connecticut, and Dr. Price of Great Britain.

"Farmington, Nov. 10, 1798.

"Sir: — On the second instant I received your letter and sermon with much delight; the memory of a friend of my youth rushed upon me with full vigor. Our intercourse with each other has unhappily been, ever since we entered upon active life, almost wholly discontinued. I have however, had much the advantage of you, in that I have been able to maintain a sort of converse with you, very pleasing and edifying, in your writings. These emanations of your mind have enabled me to mark, as I have done with much satisfaction, your progress in knowledge and refinement. I know not how it happens, except it be from union of heart and our former intimate connection, that I seem to feel myself honored by your rising reputation. I have long set you down, as one of those happy ones who are fast advancing towards the perfection of their nature. I have only to say, go on and prosper. I ardently wish and pray that I may bear you company in the happy course, though with unequal steps. Your letter is very obliging, and though your expressions are partial in my favor, they discover, I think, the heart of a friend; for I know your sincerity. For myself, I have got along hitherto in life attended with many infirmities and much weakness; which, though thorns in the flesh, I sometimes almost rejoice in, because they evince most forcibly to my mind, the power and grace of Almighty God in my support. I am an ambitious man; but yet I can truly say, I have more feared promotion than I have either desired or sought it; it brings more cares and duties than comforts; it is not in itself desirable, it is only so as a means of usefulness. It has been pregnant with evil to many, I may say to

most, who have attained it; it may be so to me, but my comfort is a hope that the same invisible hand which has conducted me, unconscious of the issue, to my present situation, will not fail to afford that aid and support which may be necessary for me.

"I am, Sir, your cordial friend
"and humble servant,
"J. TREADWELL.

"Rev. Nathanael Emmons."

"FARMINGTON, July 11, 1800.

"SIR:—I took an early opportunity of acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the twenty-second of October, 1798, and of your sermon accompanying it. I trust you received mine in return, but of this I am uncertain. It would be grateful to me to maintain a constant intercourse by letter with a friend so sincerely loved and respected; but our situation renders this difficult. If our early friendship was useful, a renewal of it at an advanced period of life, bringing with it the experience of years, it might be expected would be more so; sure I am, if it were not, the fault would be my own. My life has not been greatly variegated by sudden reverses; unexpected events have taken place; still, as a whole, they present a kind of uniform appearance. I have hitherto, through the providence of Him who governs the storm and the tempest, sailed upon a calm sea; but unless I soon arrive in port, I may chance to sail Mr. Jefferson's tempestuous sea of liberty, with the rest of my shipmates. A systematic attack on religion and government, characterizes the day. The effects already produced, are dreadful, but there is too much reason to fear they are but the beginnings of sorrows. The moral state of the world seems to justify this apprehension. Liberty I love; but it is that liberty which results from the most perfect subjection of every soul to the empire of law, and not that which is sought by illuminees and atheists. I have not time to enlarge. Accept this scrawl as a mark of my respect, and as a kind of general map of the present state of my mind, and believe me to be,

"Your affectionate friend and humble servant,
"JOHN TREADWELL.

"Rev. Nathanael Emmons."

"HACKNEY, NEAR LONDON, March 22, 1788.

"DEAR SIR:—I take the opportunity of Mr. Adams' return to America, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter and the sermons that accompanied it, and also the letter from the committee of your congregation. My best thanks are due to yourself and to your society, for the honor which you and they have done me, by the favorable manner in which the present I made them of my writings has been received; and they have, in return, my ardent wishes that they may prosper and flourish by a constant improvement in the Christian graces and virtues, and particularly in that enlightened liberality of sentiment,

and extended charity and candor of disposition, which I reckon some of the most amiable and dignifying qualities, and above all things necessary to the peace and happiness of the Christian church.

"I rejoice to find that they are under the instruction and care of a minister so able and candid as you are. May your usefulness and comfort among them be always increasing."

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"The inquiry you make about my sentiments of Mr. Hume's assertion, that a thing may begin to exist without a cause, you will find in some measure answered in the first chapter of my Treatise on Morals; and my sentiments on most of the great disputed points of Christianity, you will find in the volume of sermons which I have lately published. These sermons I beg may be accepted as an addition to the present of books which I have made to your parish; and I shall take the first opportunity of conveying them.

"Be so good as to inform your people, how truly sensible I am of the kindness of their letter to me. With all the best wishes and great regard, I am, dear Sir,

"Truly yours,

"Richard Price.

"Rev. Nathanael Emmons."

WORKS

OF NATHANAEL EMMONS, D. D.

VOLUME I.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

SERMON I.

CHRIST THE STANDARD OF PREACHING.

AN INSTALLATION SERMON.

THE officers answered, Never man spake like this man. — JOHN, vii. 46.

LONG before the Messiah made his appearance in our nature, it was foretold by the Spirit of prophecy that he should sustain the office of a preacher. Isaiah speaks of him as announcing his divine mission, to preach the joyful news of the gospel to all penitent, broken hearted sinners. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." On the ground of this and other prophecies, the Jews generally expected that the Messiah would appear in the character of a superior preacher. This we learn from what the woman of Samaria said to Christ. "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things." This general expectation of the Jews Christ did by no means disappoint; for having lived about thirty years in the obscurity of private life, he submitted to the rite of baptism, by which he was inaugurated into his office and duly prepared to preach the gospel.

As soon as he appeared in the character of a preacher, he drew the attention of the admiring multitudes, who hung upon his lips, and sensibly felt the heavy truths which, with surprising power and pungency, he poured into their minds. His serious and solemn addresses, however, were too pinching and

galling to corrupt nature, not to raise the resentment and opposition of the enemies of truth. While therefore some highly applauded his preaching, others secretly murmured and complained, till at length they carried their complaints to the Pharisees and chief Priests, who, urged by their own resentment as well as by the importunity of others, immediately "sent officers to take him." The officers, no doubt, were well pleased with their commission, and secretly rejoiced in the prospect of dragging this disturber of their peace, through crowds of exulting enemies, to the place of public justice. But their raised expectations were soon blasted. For when they came to Christ, who was warmly engaged in preaching the gospel to poor perishing sinners, they found themselves suddenly arrested by the invisible hand of truth, and secretly constrained to renounce their malignant purpose, and to return to those who sent them, with the painful conviction of the irresistible power and energy of this more than human preacher. "The officers answered, Never man spake like this man."

But how did Christ preach, or what did he say, to make such deep impressions on those who had firmly resolved to resist and oppose the truth? This question, especially at this time, justly deserves particular attention, and naturally leads us to exhibit the character of Christ as a preacher of the gospel.

Whether Christ was superior to all other men in his personal appearance and his natural powers of persuasion, we shall not pretend to conjecture, since nothing is said concerning these in the sacred oracles. We shall only mention some of his most distinguishing excellences as a preacher of the gospel, which may be fairly collected from the inspired writers who have given us the history of his life and character.

First, Christ was a *plain* preacher. A plain preacher is one who has clear and distinct ideas in his own mind, and who conveys them to the minds of his hearers in plain language. Such a preacher was Christ. His own ideas lay clear and distinct in his own mind. He was master of every subject upon which he preached. He understood the whole system of divinity. He was a member of the council of peace, who devised the plan of redemption. He was acquainted with the whole character and whole counsel of God. He was mighty in the scriptures, and understood every passage of divine inspiration. He had a thorough knowledge of the frame and constitution of the human mind, and comprehended at one view all the characters, circumstances and connections of mankind, through every period of their existence. And as these views were perfectly clear and familiar to his own mind, so he was able to express himself upon any subject with the greatest ease and

perspicuity, and to exhibit every divine truth in a plain, unstudied style, which is not only intelligible, but agreeable to persons of every character and capacity. Sensible that figurative language is the voice of nature, and best adapted to explain and illustrate whatever is dark and obscure, he made a free use of images; which spread much light and perspicuity upon all the subjects he handled. He borrowed his images, however, not from music, painting, poetry, or any of the arts which are confined to the learned few; but from the most familiar appearances and productions of nature, which lie open and common to every observer. In the temple, he used those similitudes which were naturally suggested by the various objects there. At Jacob's well, he drew his metaphors from the qualities of water. In the open air, he explained his meaning by the motions of the wind. At seed time, he borrowed his images from the sower; at harvest, from the reaper; and in the Spring, from the birds of the air, the blooming flowers, and the opening foliage. These images he used, not for the sake of decorating his style, or embellishing his subject, but for the more important purpose of enlightening and impressing the minds of his hearers. He chose his words, his figures, and all his modes of expression, with no other view than to be easily and clearly understood; and in that respect, he was the plainest preacher in the world. Hence we are told, what it is natural to suppose and believe, "the common people heard him gladly."

Secondly, Christ was a *searching* preacher. He aimed directly at the hearts of those to whom he preached. For this he had a superior advantage. He knew the heart. He was able, therefore, on every occasion when the multitudes flocked to hear him preach, to speak to the heart of each individual. This gave his preaching irresistible force and energy. He described the hearts, and thoughts, and characters of men so exactly, that while they heard him preach they felt their whole souls lie open and naked before an all seeing eye, which they could neither deceive nor escape. In short, he made his hearers feel as men will feel at the day of judgment. This perhaps was the case with respect to the officers. He knew their characters and all their secret intentions; and probably, in some part of his discourse, he took occasion to describe and expose just such characters and views as they were conscious to themselves were their own, which made them feel and say, "Never man spake like this man." This however is certain, that he generally preached according to the peculiar knowledge he had of the human heart, which enabled him to enter into every man's bosom, and search the inmost recesses of his soul. Hence we read, "Jesus, knowing their hearts," "knowing their thoughts," or

"knowing their hypocrisy," said this, or that, which was the most directly calculated to hit their real characters, and present views and feelings. The inspired writers furnish us with a variety of instances of this nature. His sermon on the mount immediately occurs. Nothing could be better adapted than that was, to search the hearts and expose the characters and conduct of the shining Pharisees, who, neglecting all inward, vital piety, placed the whole of religion in the bare observance of the outward forms and rites of divine worship. As he was preaching to "certain that trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others," he spake the parable of the publican and pharisee, which was directly suited to humble and abase such proud and conceited hypocrites. When a rich young man very respectfully put this question to him, "Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" he directed him to keep the commandments, and sell all that he had and give to the poor. This answer exactly reached his case, carried conviction to his conscience, and drew tears from his eyes. At another time, one of the company, where he was present, desired him to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance between them; but instead of replying to his words, he replied to his heart, by reading him a solemn lecture upon covetousness and worldly mindedness, in the parable of the rich fool, who lost his soul by the love of the world. Though he tenderly respected Martha, yet when she complained of her sister's conduct, he severely reproved her own. When he perceived the thoughts of his disciples, who had been cherishing ambitious views respecting their relation to him as the promised Messiah, he introduced a little child before them, to convince them of their sin and folly, and to teach them to maintain and cultivate a more meek and humble spirit. And knowing the character of those who desired his opinion concerning the woman taken in adultery, he said unto them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." This pointed answer stung them with guilt and remorse, and therefore we are told that they, "being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last."

Christ never drew a bow at a venture, but always directed the arrows of truth to the hearts of his hearers. He described the character of the saint, and the character of the sinner, with so much truth and propriety, that every person might easily distinguish the one from the other, and know which belonged to himself. Nay, he did more than this; for he directed every man's eyes inward, and obliged him by the light of truth to see and feel his own character. This is that peculiar excellence in preaching, for which, "the finest encomium, perhaps, ever be-

stowed on a preacher, was given by Louis XIV. to the eloquent Bishop of Clermount, Father Massillon. After hearing him preach at Versailles, he said to him, "Father, I have heard many great orators in this chapel; I have been highly pleased with them; but for you, whenever I hear you, I go away displeased with myself; for I see more of my own character."

Thirdly, Christ was a *sentimental* preacher. His sermons were replete with sentiment. He fed his hearers with knowledge and understanding. He delivered plain, heavy, interesting truths, which not only enlighten the mind, but find the nearest passage to the heart. Though there was a rich variety in his preaching, yet he chiefly insisted on those peculiar doctrines of the gospel which are the most disagreeable to corrupt nature; and which, perhaps, for that reason alone, have often been called obscure and deep points of mere speculation.

That Christ was a sentimental preacher, we need no other evidence than his public discourses. He plainly taught the doctrine of the sacred Trinity, which supports the scheme of redemption, and lies interwoven with the capital doctrines of the gospel. He said that he and his Father were one; that he was in the Father, and the Father in him; and that the Holy Ghost proceeded from both. He insisted, however, principally on his own divinity, which was so essential to his character as the Saviour of sinners. He said, "Before Abraham was, I am." He said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, which is in heaven." And he called God his Father, in such a sense as plainly implied, and was understood to mean, that he was equal to God in every divine perfection. He inculcated the doctrine of personal election to eternal life, as a truth of great practical importance. He spoke of the elect, as those for whom his Father had given him; as those for whom, in a particular sense, he laid down his life; and as those whom no impostor could seduce, and whom God himself would avenge. Indeed it was a familiar expression with him, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Divine sovereignty was another delightful theme of his preaching. He delivered a sermon upon this subject, in the congregation of Nazareth, which, with its remarkable effects, we find recorded in the fourth chapter of Luke. And this doctrine was so agreeable to his own heart, that, upon seeing a bright and glorious display of it, he broke out into a rapture of praise, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

He urged the absolute necessity of disinterested love upon

all his followers, as the essence of true religion, and as that alone which discriminates the characters of the children of God. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

That mankind by nature are totally destitute of this disinterested love, and wholly governed by the opposite spirit of selfishness, he abundantly taught in the course of his preaching. "I know you," said he to sinners, "that ye have not the love of God in you." And he scrupled not to call them vipers and serpents, and even the children of the devil. And he carried the doctrine of total depravity into its natural and necessary consequences, and condemned sinners for all the affections of their hearts, and all the actions of their lives.

Accordingly, upon this ground, he asserted the absolute necessity of regeneration, or the renovation of the heart by the Spirit of God. He expressly said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And when Nicodemus appeared to misapprehend his meaning, he rejoined, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." And in full consistency with this, he commanded sinners to repent and believe the gospel immediately. Accordingly we read, "After that John was put in prison, Jesus came from Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel."

He assured all his faithful followers that they should finally persevere to eternal life. "Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." Again, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My

Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

I might proceed to mention the doctrines of a general, and of a particular providence; and the duties of self-denial, unconditional submission, and universal obedience to the divine commands; all which Christ plainly taught from time to time in his public discourses. But I shall only add that he absolutely asserted, in the plainest terms, the endless punishment of those who die in impenitence and unbelief. In this respect, he brought life and immortality to light, and discovered more of the invisible scenes of the invisible world, than had been ever discovered before by any of the teachers sent from God. Thus the words which Christ spoke, the doctrines which he delivered, they were life, and they were death, and the same that shall judge the world at the last day; and therefore he eminently deserves the character of a sentimental preacher. This naturally leads me to observe,

In the last place, that Christ was a *moving* preacher. He is the most moving preacher, and possesses the power of persuasion to the highest degree, who is best able to convey his own views and feelings to the minds of his hearers. No speaker can effect, nor even desire to effect, more than this. Were a criminal to plead for his own life, he could desire to do no more than convey his own views and feelings to the mind of his judge. This Christ was able to do; and by doing this, he was able to move the minds of his hearers with whatsoever affections or passions he wished to excite. He had clear views and warm feelings. He was perfectly acquainted with God, with heaven, with hell, with the nature and worth of the human soul, and with all its relations and connections both in time and eternity. All his affections were pure and clear as the crystal stream. His heart was a flame of love. His soul was all sensibility. His life was immaculate innocence. And more of heaven sat on his countenance, and sparkled in his eye, than ever shone in the face of Moses, or the face of Stephen. With such views, such feelings, such heavenly appearance, could he possibly fail of speaking with astonishing solemnity and pathos? We never heard him preach, and we never shall; but we may conceive of his rising up in a large assembly of poor, guilty, perishing sinners, and, like a mighty stream, bearing down all before him, while he clearly, solemnly and affectionately laid open his own views and feelings respecting their guilt and danger, their happiness and misery to all eternity. What could equal the language of his vengeance to secure, hardened sinners? "Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." "Ye serpents!

ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" But what could be more soft and melting than the language of his love? "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." In reference to these words, the officers said — and who would not have said the same? — "Never man spake like this man." Such a plain, searching, sentimental, moving preacher was Christ, who is the standard of perfection, and the pattern of preaching to all who assume the ministerial character.

But if this be true, how can those answer it to Christ, who profess to be his ministers and to preach his gospel, and yet pay no regard to his example in their preaching? Have not such persons crept into the ministry, from age to age? Did not some preachers begin to make shipwreck of the faith, while the apostles were alive? Did they not wax worse and worse soon after their death? Did not some deny even the Lord that bought them, and maintain that he was a mere creature, a mere man, a mere phantom? Did not the body of the clergy, in the dark ages of Christianity, mix and corrupt the plainest truths of divine revelation with the vain philosophy which they borrowed from the school of Alexandria, or the academy of Plato, till scarce a single article of the gospel was left pure and unadulterated?

But, to come more home, Do the sermons of some at this day contain one sentiment delivered by Christ in his sermon on the mount, or in any other of his public discourses? Might we not hear them preach from year to year, without perceiving the least resemblance between their sermons and his, either in matter or spirit? Nay, do not some plainly preach against the sentiments which Christ delivered? Do they not preach against the revealed mode of the divine existence; against the divinity of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost; against the doctrine of election and divine sovereignty; against disinterested love and total depravity; and against regeneration, saints' perseverance, and the interminable punishment of those who die in their sins? Do not such ministers preach against Christ, and the souls of men? And are they not workers together with the god of this world, in blinding the minds of them that believe not?

How then can they answer this to Christ at the day of judgment, when the truths which he preached, and which they denied, shall shine forth in all their lustre and awful importance? How will they feel, when the immortal souls whom they have been the means of destroying for ever, shall bitterly upbraid and

reproach them for their infidelity, unfaithfulness and cruelty? What excuse can they make? Can they plead ignorance? Did they not live with the gospel in their hands, and the example of Christ before their eyes? Was it not the proper business of their lives to search the scriptures, to study the mind and will of Christ, to imbibe his spirit, and imitate his example both in living and in preaching? How therefore could they be ignorant, unless it were owing to stupidity, indolence, selfishness and blindness of heart? And will they not be obliged to confess, with shame and confusion of face, that they did seek their own things rather than the things of Christ; and did endeavor more to please men than to be the servants of Christ?

We may be very certain how Christ will treat corrupt and unfaithful ministers at the last day, from the manner of his treating such persons here on earth. He treated them with more severity than any other order of men. His love to God and precious souls seemed to inflame his indignation against corrupt preachers. He stigmatized them as blind leaders of the blind; as those who took away the key of knowledge; as those who shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, neither going in themselves, nor suffering them that were entering to go in; as wolves in sheep's clothing; and as thieves and robbers, who come on purpose to steal, and kill, and destroy his flock. Against such he denounces the severest anathemas. Wo unto you lawyers! wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees! Hence, of all men in the world, corrupt and unfaithful ministers may justly expect to meet with the heaviest frowns from the face of Christ, their injured and incensed Lord and Master, at the day of judgment.

Again: How can those people answer it to Christ, who will not receive his faithful ministers who follow his example and preach the same truths which he preached? The experience of ages shows that mankind have generally refused to give a proper reception to the ambassadors of Christ. Men naturally hate the light, and will not come to it, lest their deeds should be reproved. Therefore they feel an aversion to those preachers who exhibit the light, and inculcate the soul humbling truths of the gospel. This perhaps, they never so fully manifested as by their treatment of Christ while he tabernacled in flesh, and preached the truth with superior power and pungency. We hear of no opposition to Christ till after he commenced a preacher; but then they employed every opprobrious epithet to asperse his character. They said he was mad, and had a devil. They said he was a friend of publicans and sinners. They said he was a disturber of the peace, and a blasphemer of God. But all this hatred and obloquy arose from no other

cause, than his plain and faithful preaching. He testified of the world that their deeds were evil. He declared that what is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God. He unmasked sinners, and exposed their real characters to view. This they could not endure. Accordingly they accused, condemned and crucified him, for telling them the truth. And as Christ knew that human nature would be the same in every age, and operate in the same manner under the same circumstances, so he forewarned his faithful ministers to expect the same treatment from the world, that he had met with from it. "Ye shall be hated of all men, for my name's sake." "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" Has not this prophecy been constantly fulfilling? Does not the truth of it appear at this day? Will men now endure sound doctrine? Will they hear those ministers who tell them the truth, search their hearts, and clearly and faithfully lay open their true characters? Will vacant congregations, generally, receive and choose a preacher, who, agreeably to the spirit and example of Christ, inculcates disinterested love, total depravity, divine sovereignty, and the other distinguishing and cardinal doctrines of the gospel? Will even churches, who are the professed friends of Christ, embrace and defend the same truths which he preached and maintained at the risk of his life? And are not people very generally saying to the seers, see not, and to the prophets, prophesy smooth things; and joining hand in hand, to prevent the admission of such ministers among them as make Christ the pattern and standard of their preaching?

But how will people be able to answer this before the bar of Christ? Will they be able to plead ignorance? Hath not Christ given them his own character as a preacher, to direct them in the choice of ministers? Hath he not solemnly warned them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and to avoid all false teachers as wolves in sheep's clothing? Hath he not expressly told them that he shall consider their opposition to the truth, and to his faithful ministers, as opposition to himself? "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." Churches, congregations and individuals therefore, who are conscious to themselves that they have been guilty of rejecting and abusing Christ, by rejecting, opposing and abusing his faithful ministers, have reason to tremble in the prospect of standing before the judgment seat of Christ. Except they repent, they may read their own doom in the character and fate of Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida; or rather in the character and tremendous destruction of the whole

Jewish nation, who stoned the prophets, crucified Christ, and rejected both his gospel and ministers.

Once more: Will not this subject teach all ministers why they preach no more like Christ? Is not this, in a great measure, owing to their living no more like Christ? A minister's life must have influence upon his preaching. To preach well, it is necessary to live well. To preach like Christ, it is necessary to live like Christ. Christ lived the minister. He carried the minister into all companies. He conversed freely, indeed, with publicans and sinners; but yet was a companion only of them who feared the Lord. He kept his heart and his lips with all diligence, and never said or did the least thing out of character. He was harmless and undefiled, and maintained the awful authority of innocence. He was meek and lowly in spirit, and when he was reviled, he reviled not again. He sought not the riches, honors, or pleasures of the world, but by self denial lived above them all. He lost no time by sloth, or vain amusements, but indefatigably pursued his Father's business. He loved the ministry, and gave himself wholly to it, and relied upon Providence alone for all needful supplies. He allowed none of the vanities of time to employ his thoughts, but kept all his views and affections fixed steadily on the great objects of eternity. He spent days and nights in prayer. He lived habitually in devotion and communion with God. In short, he lived religion; he lived in heaven; and exemplified his doctrines and preaching, by his own heavenly and devout life.

Now if we who profess to be his followers and ministers, should live as he lived, should we not more likely preach as he preached? Would not such a life transfuse a spirit, an energy into our preaching, which would surprisingly arrest the hearts and consciences of our hearers? Would it not give us a fervor, a solemnity in all our private and public discourses, which nothing could gainsay or resist? Should we not speak as having authority, and not as the Scribes? Why then do we not live so? Are we not bound as men, as christians, and especially as ministers of Christ, to live such a life? And unless we do this, is there any prospect of our fulfilling our ministerial vows and engagements. We have engaged to preach like Christ, in matter and spirit. We have bound ourselves to adopt every article in his creed, and to preach, as far as we know, every sentiment which he preached, though at the hazard of our interest, reputation and lives. But shall we have love, resolution and self denial enough to carry us through such trials, unless we imbibe the spirit, and copy the life of Christ? O! let us then live better, that we may preach better, and die

better, and be better prepared to meet our people at the bar of Christ; where we must shortly stand upon a level with the lowest in the flock, and receive that final sentence from the mouth of the great Bishop of souls, which will either wring our hearts with despair, or fill them with a flood of joy.

I hope, my dear brother, you will let these thoughts sink deep into your heart, at this serious moment. Permit me to remind you that you are to make Christ the great pattern, end and object of your preaching. Endeavor, therefore, to live, and pray, and preach like Christ. He is this day sending you to preach to this people in his own room, and committing the eternal interests of their precious souls to your care and charge. For Christ's sake, be faithful to your trust. If any of this flock are scattered, or lost, or perish by a famine of the word, their blood will be required at your hands. Remember that Christ, your Lord and Master, will keep his eye upon you, and watch you every moment. He will be with you in the study, and observe you in your private preparations. He will attend you to the pulpit, and hear you preach. He will sit with you at his table, and observe your behavior at the head of his family; and he will accompany you among the people, and mark all your conversation and carriage against the day of judgment. Let Christ, then, be always in your eye and in your heart. Converse with him, consult him, and engage that gracious presence of his, which he hath promised to all his faithful ministers. Often ask yourself, how would Christ preach? how would Christ live? how would Christ converse? how would Christ behave under this trial, or that trial? how would he treat this church and congregation, were he in my place and situation? and always aim to follow the example of Christ, both in living and in preaching. Only do this, dear brother, and be assured you shall meet your whole flock at the last day with joy; and be "unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish."

The church and congregation in this place will permit me to ask them, in this serious connection, whether they are willing to receive a plain, searching, faithful minister of the gospel. Such a minister, we really hope you are this day to receive from the great Head of the church. And should he prove to be of this character, he will do great execution here, and fit every one of you for heaven or hell. It is a serious and important circumstance to have a minister of Christ live among you, whose presence will resemble the presence of Christ; who will exhibit religion before your eyes wherever you see him; who will teach you, by example, what it is to live for eternity; who will put vice and irreligion to the blush, and

strike an awe upon the mind of every secure and thoughtless sinner; and who will, from Sabbath to Sabbath, lay open the blackness, turpitude and malignity of the human heart; and bring God near to you, and you near to God; and make you feel that there is but one alternative before you, either to believe and be saved, or to refuse and be damned. You will, moreover, please to lay it up in your minds, that your treatment of such a minister will be considered as your treatment of Christ himself. If you love him, you will love Christ; if you are kind to him, you will be kind to Christ; if you hear him, you will hear Christ; and if you receive him, you will receive Christ. But if you despise him, you will despise Christ; if you abuse him, you will abuse Christ; if you reject him, you will reject Christ; and one day know, to your cost, that there has been a minister of Christ among you.

In a word, let me say to this whole assembly, Take heed how ye hear. Serious and eternal are the consequences of your living under the preaching of the faithful ministers of Christ. You may indeed be able to despise and reject the solemn messages which they bring to you from Sabbath to Sabbath, till the day of grace and space of repentance are no more. But you will not be able to despise the voice of Christ, who, on earth, spoke as never man spake; and who, at the day of judgment, will speak as he never spoke before, and say to all impenitent gospel sinners, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!"

SERMON II.

MINISTERS THANKFUL FOR THEIR OFFICE.

INSTALLATION OF THE REVEREND DAVID AVERY, TO THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE IN THE CHURCH IN WRENTHAM, MAY 25, 1786.

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. — 1 Timothy, i, 12.

Many of those favored persons, whom Christ has employed as signal instruments of promoting his wise and gracious designs, have been raised up and qualified for his service, in a manner very unexpected both to themselves and to the world. The Lord Jesus raised up Joseph, Moses and David, and prepared them for the noble and important parts which they had to act upon the stage of life, by a series of surprising and mysterious causes and events. But the most remarkable instance of this nature that we find in all the sacred pages, is the great apostle Paul. Christ, by a miracle of grace, took him out of the kingdom and service of Satan, and employed him in promoting and defending that glorious cause, which, just before, he had been laboring with all his might to overthrow and destroy. And this wise and gracious conduct of Christ so deeply affected his heart, that he could never speak of it without the warmest gratitude, and the highest expressions of admiration and praise. "By the grace of God I am what I am." "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." And "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." This text, without any comment, plainly implies that those whom Christ furnishes for the ministry, are thankful for their office.

We shall therefore first show that Christ furnishes men for the ministry; and then suggest several reasons, why those whom Christ furnishes for the ministry are thankful for their office.

It belongs to Christ, as the Governor of the world, and as the Head of the church, to raise up and qualify men for the service of the sanctuary. This Paul more than intimates in the words of the text. And every where in the New Testament, ministers are represented as the servants and ambassadors of Christ, and as his peculiar, ascension gifts to the church. Christ is said to give not only apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, but also pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, and for the work of the ministry. Hence we may justly consider Christ as forming and qualifying, as well as authorizing, all his own ministers, in every age of the church.

The weakest eye is capable of discerning a great diversity in the characters of men, as to their natural powers and abilities. This difference, indeed, sometimes appears almost equal to that which draws the line of distinction between us and the various tribes of sensitive natures. Solomon, Socrates, and Newton, to name no more, differed as much from some of the lowest of our own species, as one star differs from another star in glory. But all this diversity of intellectual furniture originates from Christ, who endows mankind with various abilities, according to the various services in which he designs to employ them. Some men he means to employ in preaching the gospel, and for that reason, enriches their minds with such distinguishing qualities, as he knows the importance of their office justly requires. Paul, we are told, was a chosen vessel. Christ always meant to make him a minister. He raised him up to preach the gospel among the heathen nations. And accordingly we find that he endowed him with those superior powers and talents which were equal to his superior office; and which, in the eye of the prince of critics, gave him a rank among the celebrated orators of Greece and Rome. By this instance of his conduct, Christ has plainly told us, that in his view there is no station nor employment of life which requires better natural abilities than the ministerial office. Nor can we conceive that any one should need a clear perception, a penetrating judgment, a lively imagination, and all the powers of persuasion, more than a minister of the gospel, whose business it is to understand, to explain, and to enforce, the deep things of God, which carry life or death to every hearer. Christ, therefore, who always acts with infinite wisdom and propriety in adapting means to ends, bestows a large portion of intellectual furniture upon those whom he forms for the great and arduous work of preaching the gospel.

But the noblest powers of nature stand in need of the nurturing hand of education. The uninstructed mind resembles the unpolished diamond, before the artificer's hand has given the finishing stroke to display its sparkling beauties. Sensible, therefore, of the happy influence of instruction to strengthen and enlarge, as well as to soften and refine the opening powers of the mind, Christ has taken particular care from age to age, that those whom he designs for great and extensive service in his church and kingdom, should enjoy the benefit of a learned education. As he raised up Paul to be a pillar of the church, and a principal instrument of spreading the gospel through the world, so, in order to furnish him for this great and arduous work, he brought him up at the feet of Gamaliel, the most noted and learned Rabbi in the Jewish nation. And no doubt Paul improved his time to the best advantage, and acquired a large stock of that human knowledge, which he found to be of eminent service to him afterwards, in preaching the gospel, and opening the great truths of divine revelation. I know, indeed, Dr. Campbell conjectures that he derived most of his learning from the Jewish Rabbis, who taught mere fables, traditions and endless genealogies, which could be of no great service to a preacher of the gospel. But, if we only consider that he was born in the famous city of Tarsus;* that there, probably, he spent his younger years in the study of the sciences; that he went into Judea merely to finish his education, and gain a more thorough knowledge of the religious sentiments of his own nation; that he was well acquainted with the heathen poets, and able to quote them with beauty and propriety; and that he disputed the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in the city of Athens, which, as the seat of learning and of learned men, was called the eye of Greece; I say, if we only consider this, we shall be apt to conclude that Christ furnished him with large measures of human, as well as divine knowledge, to qualify him to preach the gospel in every part of the world. But besides Paul, we may mention many others, whom Christ has formed for his more immediate and special service by means of a public education. He educated Moses in the court of Pharaoh. He educated Samuel in the house of the Lord in Shiloh. He educated David in the court of Saul. He educated Solomon in the court of David. He educated the prophets in the schools of Samuel, of Elijah, and of Elisha, which were at Bethel, Jericho and Gilgal.† He educated Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in the academy in the city of

* See Bishop Watson's Theological Tracts, vol. ii, p. 182.

† See Lewis's Antiquities of the Hebrew Republic.

Babylon. And to supply the defect of a learned education in the apostles and primitive ministers of the gospel, he miraculously endowed them not only with the gift of tongues, but also with the superior gifts of knowledge and of wisdom.* These instances plainly show that Christ is a friend to learning, and that he commonly makes use of it to qualify men for eminent service in his spiritual kingdom.

But, besides all these powers and improvements of nature, he also communicates his own spirit to his ministers, and makes them like minded with himself. For this is one of his invariable maxims, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." He views every natural man as a real enemy to his cause and kingdom; and therefore totally unfit to preach the gospel, until he has experienced a saving change, and become heartily united to his person and interest. Of this, we have a clear and striking instance in the apostle Paul. Before his conversion, notwithstanding all his shining qualities and literary improvements, he was, "a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious," and fit to be the minister of Satan only, in whose cause and service he most heartily engaged. Christ therefore appeared to him as he was going to Damascus, and struck conviction into his conscience, laid open the plague of his heart, destroyed his false hopes, and raised him from spiritual death to spiritual life. And this divine change sanctified all his natural and acquired abilities, directed them to their proper use and end, united his heart to the cause of truth, and inspired him with holy zeal and fortitude to spread the triumphs of the cross in the face of a frowning world. Thus a good capacity, a good education, and a good heart, are the noble qualifications which Christ bestows upon those whom he raises up, and employs in the sacred work of the gospel ministry.

We shall now, in the second place, as proposed, suggest several reasons why the ministers of Christ are thankful for their office.

The first reason to be given is this; that the ministerial office bears a favorable aspect upon a life of religion and vital piety. The ministers of Christ hunger and thirst after righteousness, and desire to perfect holiness in the fear of God. They are thankful therefore for that employment which serves to advance, rather than to obstruct their progress in the Christian and divine life. In this respect, we find a difference among the various callings which divine providence requires various persons to pursue. Some useful and necessary employments

* 1 Cor. xii.

seem rather unfavorable to piety and devotion, and throw obstacles in the way of that habitual intercourse and communion with God, which every christian ardently desires to maintain and improve. The common business of merchants, of farmers, of mechanics, is apt to engross their attention and divert their minds from divine objects, and leave them too little time and inclination for the secret duties of devotion. Some, who go down to the sea in ships, and others, who jeopard their lives in the high places of the field, lament the loss of those divine ordinances and numerous aids to piety which they once enjoyed in the more retired and silent scenes of life. And the pious physician painfully feels the embarrassments of his calling, which so often rob him of his happiest hours in the closet and in the family, as well as in the house of God.

But the minister of Christ is freed from all these obstructions to piety, by the nature of his office, which gives him time, retirement, and all the means of secret, private and public devotion. His main work is the proper food of a pious heart, and serves to nourish and strengthen every holy and religious affection. His daily business calls him to retirement, and in that retirement to commune with God and his own heart, to search the scriptures, and meditate upon the glorious objects of eternity. His public office leads him to the house of God, and there to take the most active and animating part in the public exercises of religion. His own discourses, which should always flow warm from his own heart, give him an opportunity of deriving the largest portion of spiritual instruction, from every subject upon which he descants in public. His duty calls him to the house of mourning, and to the chambers of the sick and of the dying; where all the feelings of benevolence, of compassion and of friendship, are naturally awakened and improved. His duty also carries him among lively christians, among mourning saints, and distressed sinners; where the beauties of religion, the worth of souls, and the presence of God, serve to solemnize his mind, and to warm his heart with devout and heavenly affections. Besides all this, the peculiar difficulties which attend his office, yield him a fair opportunity of improving his mind in some of the most amiable of the Christian graces. The difficulties which he discovers in his studies, the difficulties which he finds in discoursing with his people under a great variety of soul concerns, and the difficulties which arise from the blindness, the caprice, and the baser passions of human nature, all unite to lead him to God, and to oblige him to live in the continual exercise of faith and hope, of submission and dependence, of humility and meekness. Paul appears to have made a great proficiency in the school of affliction, and to have

derived much benefit from the heavy trials which he underwent in the discharge of his office. He learned in whatever state he was, therewith to be content. And therefore he says, "Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak then am I strong." Hence the apostles, and the primitive ministers of Christ, and those of their successors who have gone through the most fiery trials, have exhibited the most shining characters of practical religion and vital piety. So that the ministry, both by its duties and its trials, is eminently calculated to improve those who are employed in it, in all the branches of the Christian and divine life, and therefore affords them abundant reason to be thankful for their office.

Secondly: The ministers of Christ are thankful for their office, because it gives them peculiar advantages to enrich their minds with useful and divine knowledge. A thirst for knowledge, especially for the knowledge of God and of divine things, always accompanies a good capacity and a good heart. And as these are qualifications of the ministers of Christ, so they are thankful for an office which not only permits, but requires them to incline their ear to wisdom, to cry after knowledge, and to lift up their voice for understanding; to seek her as silver, and to search for her as for hid treasures. It is the unhappy lot of mankind, in general, to pursue employments which confine their whole attention to a very small number of low and sensible objects, and thereby prevent the cultivation and refinement of all their nobler powers and faculties. But the ministerial office gives a free scope to the excursions of the mind, and opens a wide field for intellectual pleasures and improvements. The divine may walk with historians, metaphysicians and philosophers as far as they go, and then pass on to regions beyond the circle of their acquaintance. For they confine their researches to the laws and works of nature, which are objects that were born with time, which live with time, and which shall die when time dies. But his business leads him out of time into eternity, carries him back to endless ages before creation began, and pushes him forward to interminable ages beyond the judgment day; and requires him to be acquainted not only with the works and laws of nature, but also with the God of nature, and his supreme end in all the works of providence and grace. A man therefore might be as great a metaphysician as Locke, as great a philosopher as Newton, as great a naturalist as Solomon, and yet, in point of the noblest knowledge, fall far below the apostle Paul, who understood the deep

things of divine revelation, which alone can explain all the works and ways of the Supreme Being. As it would be of little service to know all the springs and wheels and motions of a watch, without knowing the end for which it was made; so it would be of little service to know the whole machinery and construction of the whole material and intellectual system, without knowing the end for which it was created. Hence it is of more importance to know why things exist, than how they exist; why God has established the laws of nature, than how they operate; why he has made us as we are, than how he made us such. There is no study more agreeable and more useful, than the study of final causes. And this is the study of the divine; to whom it properly belongs to discover the chief end of man, to vindicate the ways of God, and to explore the final cause of things, from the sacred oracles of truth. His business therefore requires him to extend his researches to matters of a higher nature, and of more importance, than those which employ the attention of the sons of science; and so affords him a happy opportunity of feeding his mind with the same glorious truths which angels now desire to look into, and which all holy beings will for ever contemplate, with growing ardor and delight. And this is a good reason why he should be thankful for his office. But,

Thirdly: A greater reason is, that it opens before him the largest sphere of usefulness. It is the sincere and ardent desire of a pious heart to be useful. The language of Paul is the language of every real saint: "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" And the ministerial office appears so adapted to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls, that perhaps almost every young convert, for a while at least, wishes to be a minister, and thinks that he should be able to convert all the world. So young Melancthon thought, till painful experience taught him to the contrary. This, however, is certain, that no other employment of life opens so fair a prospect of doing good, as the work of the ministry. A minister has the same opportunities which other men have to be useful in all the common relations and connections of life. He has still an opportunity peculiar to himself, to do good by the insensible and powerful influence of example; because his office places him on such an eminence, and is of such a sacred nature, as naturally to draw the eyes and attention of all to his conduct. It belongs to his office to strengthen the cords of civil society, by condemning vice, by inculcating virtue, and by enforcing the righteous laws of man from the word of God and the motives of eternity. And it is a part of his duty to attend to the rising hopes of his flock, and instil into their young and tender minds the first principles of

virtue and wisdom; which lay the broadest foundation for peace and harmony among families, among societies and larger communities. But his widest sphere of usefulness lies in that divine authority with which he is invested, to bear the messages of God to men, and teach them those great and important truths by which they may become wise to salvation. By virtue of this authority, Paul became so extensively useful in the first age of Christianity. When Christ appeared to him to put him into office, he addressed him in such serious and animating language as this: "Rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified." This was as much as to say, Go, and be my instrument of converting thousands of immortal souls, who are now perishing for lack of knowledge; that they may be delivered from the power of Satan, and from the dominion of sin, and restored to the favor of God, and set up as the everlasting monuments of free and sovereign grace. All this good, we have reason to believe that Paul was actually the means of promoting, by fulfilling the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus. Where then shall we find another such instance of extensive usefulness? Joseph, who saved two nations from temporal ruin, was a useful man; Moses, who led the people of God through seas, and swords, and plagues, to the borders of Canaan, was a useful man; David, who served God and his generation upon the throne of Israel, was a useful man; and Solomon, who built, for the honor and service of God, the most grand and elegant temple that the sun ever beheld, was a useful man. But, I appeal to all who have read of the labors of Paul, and the fruits of his ministry, whether he was not the means, in the hand of Christ, of diffusing much greater, much nobler, and much more permanent happiness among his fellow creatures, than Joseph, or Moses, than David or Solomon, or than any other man before or since. Hence Paul was so thankful for the ministry, and so willing to live and preach the gospel, even while he longed for heaven, and the immediate presence and enjoyment of Christ. And hence all the ministers of Christ are thankful for the same office, which opens such an extensive field for usefulness in promoting the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. Especially when they consider once more,

Fourthly: That their work is of such a nature, as to carry its

own present and future reward with it. The ministers of Christ receive no inconsiderable reward as they go along, before their labors and their lives are ended. They enjoy the pleasure which there is, in separating themselves from the world, and intermeddling with all wisdom. They enjoy the benefit which there is, in the effectual and fervent prayers of those who esteem them highly in love, for their work's sake. They enjoy the satisfaction which there is, in observing their people growing in knowledge and grace, under their public and private instructions. And they sometimes enjoy that more noble and divine happiness, which results from the success of their labors in the conversion of sinners, of whom they had travailed in birth till Christ was formed in them. These spiritual children are their reward, while they live and converse with them in this life; they will be their reward when they meet them in heaven; they will be their reward, when they meet them at the day of judgment; and they will be their living and growing reward, from that day forward for ever. Such a prospect as this supported and animated Paul, under all his labors and sufferings in the vineyard of Christ. Hence he writes thus, to those whom he had begotten through the gospel, at Corinth: "For we which live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." "For which cause we faint not." To the same persons he says again in this same epistle, "Ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus." He calls the Philippian converts, his "joy and crown." And, in the pleasing language of raised expectation, he asks the Thessalonians, "What is our hope, our joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?" How glorious does the apostle now appear in heaven, surrounded with the living fruits of his labors? And how glorious will he appear at the last day, when Christ shall present him and all his spiritual family to the view of the assembled universe, to be each other's joy and crown of rejoicing for ever? We are no where told what shall be the particular reward of Moses, of Samuel, of David, or of any other eminent servants of God; but we know that Paul's reward shall finally consist in the fruits of his labors in the work of the ministry. His work has carried, and will carry its own reward with it, as long as he and his people shall enjoy the mansions of heaven. Hence he might well say, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the

ministry." And all the ministers of Christ have the same reason to be thankful for their office, while they are now reaping, and expecting hereafter to reap, such a living and growing reward of their labors, in the salvation of souls.

A few reflections will now conclude the subject.

First: The office of the ministry is the most desirable office in the world. "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." There is no office that can be more desirable than this. It is every way suited to gratify all the desires of a pious and devout heart. It carries religion, learning, usefulness, and its own divine and permanent reward with it. And it gives the freest scope to the utmost exertions of all the powers and faculties of the soul. The general rebellion of our world has opened the widest field for the ambassadors of Christ, to employ all their gifts and graces in beseeching sinners to become reconciled to God. Every minister of the gospel has a more important cause to plead than ever employed the eloquence of Demosthenes, or Cicero. And if he gain his cause, he not only saves a soul from death, and recovers a subject to God; but also conquers the powers of darkness, and fills the world of light with joy. Besides, his works bear the stamp of immortality, and can receive no injury from the blasting power and influence of age. The works of Raphael and of Hogarth, are every day perishing under the mouldering hand of time. The laws and constitutions of Solon, of Lycurgus, of Numa, are no more. The works of Homer, of Milton, of Shakespeare, are constantly verging toward oblivion. Noah's ark, which was a hundred and twenty years in building, has, for ages and ages, been dissolved in dust. And Solomon's temple, the noblest monument of wealth and of art, has long since been razed to its foundation, and thrown into heaps of ruins. But the works of Paul, those living temples which he raised up, have followed him to heaven; where they still survive the ruins and ravages of time, and grow in beauty as they grow in age. His office, therefore, was a good office; his work a good work. And whoever desires this work, desires the best work that ever employed the head, or heart, or tongue of man. "He that winneth souls is wise;" and he that desireth the office of winning souls, is wise in the choice of his office.

Secondly: The ministerial office needs no foreign aid, to recommend itself to those who are qualified for it. Some are ready to apprehend that the ministry would soon become vacant, if it should once unhappily lose the protection and support of the civil power. Our learned youth, we are told, are turning their attention to law, physic and merchandise, and

but few, and those too not of the most promising parts, are looking forward to the ministry. And what, we are asked, will soon become of the sacred office? Who will desire it under so many worldly embarrassments and disadvantages? Our subject replies, Those who desire a good work for the sake of a good work, and not for the sake of honor, ease, or filthy lucre. The ministerial office will live as long as religion lives, and will be filled with able and faithful men, as long as able and faithful men are in the world. The church has always had the best pastors, when there were no secular advantages to draw men into the ministry, and the worst spiritual guides, when there were the strongest worldly motives to preach the gospel. Hence there is no ground to fear that the ministerial office will ever suffer by being deprived of worldly appendages. The work of the ministry will always recommend itself to able and faithful men, who will esteem it a privilege to plead the cause of Christ, and promote the salvation of sinners. Why did Paul thank Christ for putting him into the ministry? Did the ministry in his day enjoy the smiles and support of the civil magistrate? Or did the office open the road to honor, opulence, or ease? Certainly this was not the case. He chose the ministry, therefore, because it was a good office in its own nature, independent of all human establishments. He often intimates, indeed, that the world called him a fool for his choice. But he thought it sufficient to reply, "Wo is me, if I preach not the gospel."

Thirdly: The ministerial office is no burden to the people. One, who calls himself a moral philosopher,* undertakes to prove in the face of stubborn fact, that the people of Israel were utterly unable to support their expensive priesthood. And many, at this day, seem to have the same opinion concerning the ministers of Christ. They look upon the institution as a burden, and wish to be exempted from maintaining such a numerous set of men, whose support costs them, in their view, much more than they are worth. But if there be any weight in this objection, we presume to say that it lies not against the office of the ministry, but against those only who unworthily sustain it. The office requires great and good men to fill it, who are endowed with the richest gifts and graces of Christ, and who are able to instruct the people in things which infinitely concern them as rational and immortal creatures. And though individuals have disgraced their office, yet the ministers of Christ, as a body, have actually done more to enlighten the minds, to restrain the corruptions, and to cultivate the vir-

* Morgan.

tues of mankind, than any other order of men in the world. This, every Christian people are obliged to own, and especially the people in New England. We have long sustained, and perhaps in some measure still sustain the character of a sober, virtuous and religious people. But this, under God, must be chiefly ascribed to the succession of able and faithful ministers, who have planted and watered our churches, and who have so firmly fixed us in the faith once delivered to the saints, that no deceivers have been able to eradicate from our minds the first principles of virtue and religion, or to turn us aside from the fundamental doctrines of divine revelation.* We, therefore, have no reason to complain of the ministerial office, from which we have derived, and do still derive such precious and important advantages. But, on the other hand, we have every reason to venerate the divine institution, to esteem the ministers of Christ highly in love for their work's sake, and to give them a support, which is the best suited to render them the most extensively useful.

Fourthly: The ministers of the gospel ought to give themselves wholly to the duties of their office. Do they love their office? Are they thankful for their office. Do they esteem their office a peculiar privilege? Then surely they ought to exert themselves, with unwearied diligence, in the faithful discharge of all its duties. These are various and important enough to employ all their time and all their abilities. The greatest and best of men have found themselves unequal to the arduous task, and felt themselves ready to sink under the weight of their sacred work. Even Paul was so sensible of the difficulty and importance of ministerial duties, that he cried out, under a deep sense of human weakness and imbecility, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Ministers have no time to spare for amusements, for diversions, or for the peculiar studies of any other profession than their own. And if they had time, the nature of their office forbids them to dissipate their minds by the cares, the pleasures, or the pursuits of the world. But some, perhaps, may plead necessity for neglecting the duties of their office. This necessity very seldom takes place. Let ministers therefore consider their solemn vows to Christ, and by a faithful discharge of their office, convince their people that they are entirely devoted to their service; and then, if their complaints be not removed, their consciences will be eased. This however, is certainly that course of conduct which Paul directs

* See the Westminster Catechism, which has been generally adopted; the Massachusetts Confession of Faith; and the writings of Hooker, Shepard, Stoddard, Edwards.

Timothy, and every other minister of the gospel, to pursue. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."

Fifthly, The ministers of the gospel should cheerfully submit to that state of self denial, in which the nature of their office requires them to live. Their peculiar station deprives them of many worldly enjoyments, and naturally subjects them to a life of self denial. They have no grounds to expect that honor, that ease, that affluence, or that independence, which attends many other employments of life. These alluring prospects they are called to renounce, and cheerfully submit to more humble and self denying circumstances. To such a state of humility and self denial Christ and the apostles cheerfully subjected themselves, through the whole course of their ministry. Paul, in particular, made great sacrifices to his office, and readily submitted to all the scenes of self denial which he knew would attend the preaching of the gospel. He says, "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." Flesh and blood would naturally say, Spare thyself, and plunge not into all the dangers and mortifying circumstances, which overwhelm the despised preachers of the cross. But, resisting these solicitations of nature, and yielding to the motions of grace, he resolved to obey the call of Christ, and preach the gospel at the hazard of every worldly interest. This was a signal act of self denial. For he was a young man of shining talents, and of great expectations; at least, the great men of the nation had fixed their eyes upon him, and had given him a mark of their particular esteem and regard, by granting him a commission to execute a very important design. But all these flattering prospects he cheerfully gave up, for the sake of the ministry. And when he was called to the trial, he made good his resolutions, and courageously endured the afflictions of the gospel. The account of his trials and sufferings, is enough to make the first clergymen in Europe, the prelates of all established churches, and all who sustain the ministeral character, ashamed of themselves, whenever they complain of the burdens of their office. He was "in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews," says he "five times I re-

ceived forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness, and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Yet after all this, in the close of his life he could sincerely say, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." He always maintained such a grateful sense of the distinguishing privilege of being a minister of the gospel, that he felt as though he could never do nor suffer enough, to promote the cause of Christ and the salvation of sinners. Surely then we, who sustain the same office, ought to feel the same spirit, and cheerfully go through all the trials that attend us in the course of our ministry. If we love our office, if we are thankful for it, how readily should we take up the cross, despise the pomp and splendor of the world, and silently walk in the low vale of obscurity, neglect and dependence.

Sixthly: Christ has laid his ministers under the most endearing obligations to be faithful in their office. He has raised them up. He has given them their noble powers and faculties. He has enriched their minds with all their treasures of knowledge and grace. And besides all this, he has put them into the highest and best office in his kingdom. They are bound therefore by their office, by their gifts and graces, and by all the ties of love and gratitude, to preach the gospel with the utmost plainness and fidelity. Paul felt the weight and influence of all these tender motives, and accordingly chose to be the servant of Christ rather than the servant of men, and to displease all the world rather than to displease him, who had put him into the ministry. He renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. He walked not in craftiness, nor handled the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. In all his epistles, but especially in those to the Romans and Ephesians, he inculcates, without the least palliation or reserve, the doctrine of native depravity, of regeneration, of election, of divine sovereignty, and of divine operation in forming the vessels of mercy and the vessels of wrath. And this faithful discharge of his office, he tells us, gave him peculiar comfort and satisfaction in the nearest views of eternity. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the

Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Now, my Fathers and Brethren, if we are the ministers of Christ, we shall likewise feel the force of these strong and tender obligations, to be faithful in our office. We shall not seek to please men, but we shall seek to please Christ. We shall tell men the truth, even though they should become our enemies for telling them the truth. We shall plainly lay open the depravity and corruption of the human heart. We shall aim to strip sinners of their self righteousness, and drive them from all their refuges of lies. We shall endeavor to make our hearers understand and feel the most disagreeable, which are indeed the most important and profitable doctrines of the gospel. And we shall labor to lodge in their consciences as well as in our own, a lasting evidence that, having declared the whole counsel of God, we are pure from the blood of all men.

Seventhly: It is a privilege to hear, as well as to preach the gospel. It was a privilege of the Gentiles to hear Paul, as well as a privilege of Paul to preach to the Gentiles. And it is a privilege of the people now to hear the ministers of Christ, as well as a privilege of the ministers of Christ to preach to the people. Indeed, the opportunity of hearing the gospel is one of the highest privileges that mankind can ever enjoy. What greater privilege can Christ bestow upon any people, than to raise up an able and faithful minister, and furnish him with his richest gifts and graces, and send him among them, "to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?" This great and invaluable blessing, my hearers, you all enjoy, who enjoy able and faithful ministers. How then will you be able to answer it to Christ at the day of judgment, if you esteem it a burden rather than a privilege, to hear them preach; and from Sabbath to Sabbath, neglect to appear in the house of God, to seek the law at their mouth? You had better misimprove any other day in the week, than misimprove the Sabbath. You had better misimprove seed time and harvest, than misimprove the precious season of hearing the word of God. You had better absent yourselves from any other place, than from the place of public worship, where God manifests his presence, and displays his pardoning mercy. You had better therefore abuse any other privilege you enjoy, than abuse the privilege of hearing the gospel; for if you abuse this privilege, you will abuse light; which above all things will enhance your guilt, and aggravate your everlasting ruin. For says Christ himself, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light."

SERMON III.

THE GOSPEL A SCHEME OF GRACE.*

AN ORDINATION SERMON.

To testify the gospel of the grace of God. — Acts, xx. 24.

Paul, in his passage from Greece to Rome, having landed at Miletus, sent and called the elders of the church of Ephesus. When they were come together, he addressed them, with peculiar solemnity and affection, on the important subject of the gospel ministry. And to make the deeper impression on their minds, he not only recalled to their remembrance his former manner of life and preaching among them, but expressed, in the most feeling manner, his present views of the nature and importance of the gospel, which both he and they were under solemn and inviolable obligations to preach. "Ye know," says

* The author believes that every man has a right to judge for himself in matters of religion; but yet he believes that no man has a right to judge for himself, even in these matters, contrary to the dictates of reason and scripture. He believes that argument and church discipline are the only proper weapons to be employed against heretics; and absolutely reprobates the cruel and absurd notion of torturing men's bodies, in order to enlighten and convince their minds. He approves the genuine candor which overlooks small errors, and the noble catholicism which embraces truth, in whatever denomination it is found; but he abhors the false and blind charity, which sees no difference between truth and error. He entertains a high opinion of the superior abilities of Mr. Locke, Dr. Price, and Dr. Priestly; he gratefully acknowledges the eminent services they have done to the Republics of Liberty and of Letters; and he especially admires the noble and independent spirit with which they have expressed their sentiments upon some of the most important subjects in divinity. But yet he believes that they have done great and extensive injury to the distinguishing and fundamental doctrines of the gospel; and therefore he wishes to expose, to the utmost of his power, the false and dangerous principles which they have endeavored to establish. And he has no doubt but all who possess their noble and independent spirit, will readily grant that he has neither transgressed the rules of decency, nor violated the laws of Christianity, in attacking their public opinions, while he has treated their characters with all proper deference and respect.

he, "from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons; serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house; testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, *to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*" In these last words we see the ground upon which the apostle was so much attached to the gospel, and so much engaged to preach it, in the face of every danger. It was because he viewed the gospel as containing and exhibiting the grace of God to our guilty world. Accordingly I shall confine my attention to this single point, that the gospel is a scheme of divine grace.

Though grace is one of the most common words in use, yet it seems necessary, in treating on the subject before us, to fix the meaning of this easy and familiar term. Grace is often used to signify goodness; but this is not the strict and proper sense of the word. For grace is the exercise of love to the guilty; whereas goodness is the exercise of love to the innocent.* Goodness and grace, therefore, immutably differ, as much as guilt and innocence, the objects upon which they finally terminate. And this distinction will for ever remain, and be felt in heaven. While angels there will for ever drink of the rivers of goodness, saints will for ever drink of the rivers of grace. When we say, therefore, that the gospel is a scheme of divine grace, we mean that it is a method which God has devised, to open the way for the free and full display of divine love to the guilty.

Now, if we search the New Testament, we shall find the gospel is every where represented as a scheme of divine grace. The angels who brought the news of Christ's birth to the shepherds, were constrained on that occasion, to celebrate the grace of the gospel with the most joyful acclamations. "And lo,

*I do not mean that every exercise of love to the guilty is grace, nor every exercise of love to the innocent, is goodness, in the strictest sense. But what I mean is, that wherever there is goodness in the strictest sense, it consists in love to the innocent; and wherever there is any grace at all, it consists in love to the guilty.

the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, *good will towards men.*" This is good will to the guilty, which is grace in the highest and best sense.

Christ himself, who was equally concerned in devising, and principally concerned in executing the plan of redemption, represents it as a scheme of divine grace. "For," saith he, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Such love as this to the guilty, is astonishing grace.

The apostle Paul, however, says more concerning the grace of the gospel than any other of the inspired writers. He touches upon this darling theme in all his epistles, and in some he undertakes to prove the gospel to be a scheme of divine grace. In the third chapter of Romans he reasons thus: "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." From these premises he brings out this fair and just conclusion, that we are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." He continues this train of reasoning to the end of this and of the next chapter, and finally concludes with these strong and striking expressions: "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." In the second epistle to the Corinthians, after opening the nature and design of the gospel, he represents it as a scheme of divine grace. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." "We then as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." By the grace of God here, the apostle evidently means the grace of God displayed in the gospel. He wrote his epistle to the Galatians

with a particular design to unfold the genius and spirit of the gospel as a scheme of divine grace. I shall, however, mention but one passage, which breathes the spirit of the whole epistle. "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God; For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." By this, the apostle plainly suggests that the gospel is so entirely built upon grace, that if this foundation be once destroyed, the whole gospel is completely frustrated and subverted. In the epistle to the Ephesians, he employs the strongest expressions to celebrate the riches of divine grace displayed in the gospel. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." He pursues this pleasing subject in the next chapter, and carries the idea of grace as high as language can carry it. "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: (by grace ye are saved:) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." I might observe that he calls the gospel "the grace of God," "the grace of God in truth," "the dispensation of the grace of God," "the grace of God which bringeth salvation." And I might still farther observe, that in the salutations of almost every epistle, the apostles abundantly celebrate the grace of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, displayed in the work of redemption. But without adducing any more passages of scripture, I shall rest the truth of the doctrine upon the plain texts which I have already cited. These are not loose, independent sentences, but chiefly distinct arguments, linked together in a chain of clear and strong reasoning, by which the apostle demonstrates the gospel to be, in its whole frame and contexture, a scheme of divine grace.

I now beg the patience and attention of my hearers, while I proceed to point out a number of truths, which immediately flow from the nature of the gospel.

1. If the gospel is a scheme of divine grace, then the work of redemption is the most glorious of all the works of God.

His works of creation are great and glorious. When he created the world, he made bright displays of his power, wisdom, and goodness. These works, however, gave him no opportunity to display the attribute of grace. And had he continued creating world after world and system after system, to this day, he might, indeed, have astonished all intelligent beings with the variety and magnitude of his works, but could have made no discovery of his grace, without the work of redemption. This is the only work in which grace is concerned, and in which grace is displayed. This work, therefore, is very diverse from all the other works of God, and as much superior to them, as it is different from them. The wonders of divine grace displayed in this work, divert the attention of the most exalted creatures from every other object in the universe. The angels, those morning stars who saw the world created, and who have been acquainted with all the works of God, still desire to look into the work of redemption, in order to make new and larger discoveries in the divine character. And when all the works of God shall be completed, and all holy beings collected, it will be their everlasting employment to celebrate the displays of divine grace in the work of redemption. Indeed this work, which has employed the thoughts of God from eternity, which has brought the Son of God from heaven to earth, and which has raised the guilty sons of men from earth to heaven, will for ever remain the grand mirror, to reflect the brightest beams of the divine glory.

2. If the gospel is a scheme of divine grace, then it is really founded on this single truth, that all the human race deserve complete and endless ruin. This, I take it for granted, is the dreadful misery from which the gospel is designed to save sinners. And this misery they deserve, if there be the least grace in the gospel. For grace consists in saving men from deserved misery. There is no grace in saving them from undeserved evils, however great and dreadful. If they were exposed to eternal destruction, and if the gospel should save them from it, yet there would be no grace displayed in their salvation, unless they deserved the damnation of hell. The gospel therefore, which bringeth salvation to sinners upon the footing of grace, necessarily supposes that they deserve eternal destruction upon the footing of justice. So that if the gospel be a scheme of grace, which is designed to save sinners from eternal misery, then it must solely rest on the ground of their just desert of complete and endless ruin. "If one died for all," says the apostle, "then were all dead;" so if the gospel offers grace to all, then all deserve to be damned. If we admit, therefore, that the gospel offers to save us from eternal destruc-

tion, upon the footing of grace, we must admit that we are ill deserving, and hell deserving creatures. This character we must not only believe, but feel, if we ever feel and enjoy the grace of the gospel.

3. If the gospel is a scheme of divine grace, then all the essential or fundamental doctrines which compose it, are doctrines of grace. The gospel is built upon a number of essential doctrines, which constitute its nature, and distinguish it from every other scheme of religion. Every system of religion, as well as every form of government, must have some peculiar and fundamental principles. This we must grant, or else deny that there is any essential difference between the religion of a Christian, and that of a Turk, or a Pagan. If the gospel then must have some fundamental principles, we may safely conclude that these are the doctrines of grace. We have no occasion to determine the number, in order to determine the nature of the first principles of the gospel. To determine the nature of the gospel, is sufficient to determine the nature of all its leading and fundamental principles. We have shown that the gospel is a scheme of divine grace; and this shows that all the doctrines which are necessary to compose this scheme of religion, are doctrines of grace. The nature of the gospel, therefore, directs us how to find its fundamental doctrines, and how to distinguish them from all other doctrines which are not essential to Christianity, or which are subversive of it.

4. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then to deny the doctrines of grace, is to deny the gospel. To deny the first principles of any system of sentiments, is to deny the system. To deny the first principles of Newton's philosophy, is to deny his system of philosophy. To deny the first principles of Bishop Berkley's ideal system, is to deny his system of metaphysics. So, to deny the doctrines of grace, which are the first principles of the gospel, is to deny the gospel. It is by no means necessary to deny the inspiration of the scriptures, in order to deny the Christian religion. The Jews readily acknowledged the inspiration of the scriptures; but yet they denied the doctrines of grace which were contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets; and for that reason, denied and rejected the gospel of grace, which Christ preached in all its purity and simplicity. And there were some in the apostle's day, who believed the gospel as a divine revelation, but at the same time, denied the doctrines of grace, and therefore in the apostle's view, really and totally denied the gospel. "I marvel," says he to the Galatians, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some

that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." The apostle here considers the gospel of Christ as a gospel of grace, and therefore considers any system of doctrines which is contrary to grace, as another gospel. But not, strictly speaking, as another gospel, because no system of sentiments which is contrary to grace, deserves the name of a gospel. Besides, he considers every one, who preaches a scheme of religion which is contrary to grace, as denying and subverting the gospel of Christ. This passage of the apostle, therefore, fully proves what our subject suggests, that to deny the doctrines of grace, is to deny the gospel.

5. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then it must disapprove and condemn all schemes of religion which are not built upon these peculiar principles. Accordingly we find the gospel has, under every dispensation, disapproved and condemned every other scheme of religion, without distinction. To this peculiarity of the gospel we must ascribe the general enmity, opposition and virulence of mankind against it, in every age of the world. It was on this account, Bishop Warburton observes, that the enemies of the Jewish religion agreed to stigmatize it as the unsociable religion. The Jews might have lived in harmony among the Pagans, had they only exercised a little catholicism towards the pagan religion. But they insisted with inflexibility, that their religion was the only true and divine religion, and every other false and absurd. And this uncharitableness towards the various species of the pagan religion, drew upon them a load of infamy, reproach and contempt. So when Christianity was propagated in the Roman empire, the emperors had no objection against its spreading among the people, until they found that the christians exercised no charity towards their religion; but as soon as they perceived this, they immediately commenced the most virulent enemies and persecutors of the meek and harmless disciples of Christ. The Pagans cultivated universal harmony and mutual charity among themselves, notwithstanding their various objects and modes of worship; for they considered all their own religions as absolutely equal in point of truth, divinity and importance. And had the christians only allowed them to consider their religion in the same light, they would have treated them with the same candor and forbearance. But the christians understood the genius and spirit of the gospel too well, to place it upon a level with any other scheme of religion in the world. They had imbibed the opinion of the inspired teachers, who unanimously condemn every system of religion but the true. The prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, reprobate all false teachers and false sentiments, with the greatest freedom and severity. Christ denounces the heaviest woes

against the Scribes and Pharisees, who taught for doctrines the commandments of men, which, in his view, made void the doctrines of grace. And with what a spirit of confidence does the apostle Paul address the Galatians on this serious subject: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." All the inspired writers speak the same language, and breathe the same spirit towards those who deny the first principles of the gospel. They have never, in any of their writings, let drop a single expression which requires, or even allows us to exercise the least catholicism towards those who maintain any system of sentiments which is subversive of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

6. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then modern catholicism is real infidelity. Men of modern catholicism make no distinction between essential and non-essential doctrines; but universally embrace, in the arms of charity, all sects or denominations of men who believe the Bible to be the word of God, whether they profess Arianism, Socinianism, Materialism, Universalism, or any other particular system of religious principles.* And what is still more remarkable, they are so lavish of their charity to these needy objects, that they have little or none to spare for others who are more strict and orthodox than themselves. Mr. Locke, in his 'Reasonableness of Christianity,' labors to prove that all a man needs to believe in order to be saved, is this single proposition, *that Jesus is the Christ.* And Dr. Price is equally liberal in his religious sentiments. In a letter to Dr. Priestly, he expresses his most ardent wish that this sentiment might be stamped on every human mind: "That worth of character and true integrity, and consequently God's acceptance, are not necessarily connected with any particular set of opinions." Yet this great and catholic divine, in one of his late sermons, first gives a concise and accurate account of the doctrines of grace, and then reprobates them as the most absurd set of principles to be found in the Christian world. This is modern catholicism, which extends to all but those to whom it ought to extend; and which would break down all distinction between essential and non-essential doctrines, that every man may have full liberty to embrace any scheme of religion, however false and absurd.

Now is not such catholicism real infidelity? Does it not

* "Indeed, this charity is as mysterious as the faith of the most bigoted Catholic; it is equally full of contradictions; and seems resolved to found itself, not upon evidence, but upon the want of it."—*Dr. Witherspoon's Ecclesiastical Characteristics, Maxim* xii.

carry in it a disbelief of all that Christ, the prophets, and the apostles have said, concerning the fatal tendency of corrupt sentiments in religion? And does it not, at the same time, equally carry in it a disbelief of all the fundamental principles of Christianity? Can any man really believe the essential doctrines of the gospel, and yet believe that he or any other person may disbelieve and deny them at his pleasure, without the least danger or guilt? This would be to set a lower price upon Christianity than the Jews set upon its divine Author, and to betray the doctrines of grace for less than thirty pieces of silver.

Besides, this catholicism tends to beget and diffuse a deistical spirit among all ranks and classes of men. For if once they imbibe the notion that the gospel may be made to mean any thing, every thing, or nothing; that it has no essential and fundamental doctrines, which are absolutely necessary to be believed in order to salvation; they will readily draw this easy and natural conclusion, that it is of no real importance whether they believe the gospel to be of divine inspiration or not. And were it true, that men might be saved without believing a single doctrine of the Bible, it would be difficult, indeed, to show why they could not as well be saved without believing the Bible itself. Modern catholicism, therefore, which sets the doctrines of grace and all the fundamental principles of Christianity in such a low and trifling light, serves more to propagate the spirit of deism and universal skepticism, than all the boasted and specious arguments of professed infidels. Indeed, let any one only adopt this catholic principle, and there is nothing to restrain him from embracing the grossest errors and absurdities that can possibly be suggested. This is already exemplified in Dr. Priestly, who would fain pass for a warm and bold defender of Christianity, after he has exerted the whole strength of his genius and the whole force of his learning, to subvert some of the fundamental principles of both natural and revealed religion.

7. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then there may be a propriety in forming and subscribing creeds, or confessions of faith. These are considered in a very bad light by men of moderation and catholicism. They would have the Bible to be the only standard of orthodoxy, and represent creeds and confessions of faith as a clog to inquiry, a source of hypocrisy, and even a violation of the sacred rights of conscience and private judgment. But let us consider whether there be any just ground to discard all creeds and confessions of faith. If a man may believe the divinity of the gospel, and yet disbelieve and deny the doctrines of grace, which are the fundamental principles of the gospel, then his most ample profession of believing the inspiration of the scriptures, is no proper evidence of his being found in the faith, and established

in the first principles of the oracles of God. There is therefore a necessity of having some standard more particular and definite than the general standard of the scriptures, if we wish to ascertain whether a man really believes the doctrines of grace, which are the distinguishing principles of Christianity. And if such a standard be proper and necessary, it is as easy to form it, as to distinguish and define the nature and essence of the gospel. For if the gospel be plain and easy to understand, then it is easy to distinguish and collect the first principles of it, and to throw them into the form of a creed, or confession of faith. Nor do any at this day, if I conjecture right, object against creeds because they do not understand them, but because they do. And, after the first principles of the gospel are thus thrown into the form of a creed, a man may solemnly subscribe them as articles which he now believes, and which he always will believe. For the doctrines of grace are not mere opinions, which a man may change every day in the year, but real, essential, important truths, which he may know to be truths, and which he is obliged always to believe and profess, at the risk of his life. There is a wide difference between essential and non-essential truths, or between bare opinions and infallible doctrines. The primitive martyrs understood this distinction, and accordingly gave up their lives, rather than give up the essential doctrines of the gospel. Paul likewise understood this distinction, and therefore kept the faith, at the expense of his life. And upon the ground of this distinction, the inspired writers exhort christians to maintain a firm and unshaken adherence to the doctrines according to godliness. The wise man bids us "buy the truth, and sell it not." Paul forbids the Ephesians to be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." He tells the Colossians that they would render themselves acceptable to God, if they continued in the faith grounded and settled, and were not moved away from the hope of the gospel. And again he says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith." In his second epistle to the Thessalonians, after describing the Man of sin, who should bring in strong delusions to the destruction of those who should believe them, he says, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our gospel;" "Therefore brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, by word, or our epistle." In one of his directions to Timothy, he says, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them." And in another, he says, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou

hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Now if the scripture thus binds us to be rooted, grounded, settled, stablished in the faith, then we may bind ourselves to hold fast the form of sound words, and to be steadfast and unmovable in the doctrines of Christ. For, whatever God may bind us to do, we may bind ourselves to do. Christians in general, therefore, and Christian ministers in particular, may, whenever there is a proper occasion for it, bind themselves to be found in the faith, by owning and subscribing a creed, or confession of faith. There is the same safety and consistency in owning and subscribing an orthodox creed, as in owning and subscribing the Bible itself. For we may as certainly know whether the principles which lie in a creed be true, as whether the principles which lie in the Bible be true. And it is as warrantable to profess our belief of certain truths which lie in a creed, as to profess our belief of certain truths which lie in the Bible. And this has always been the general opinion of the church, from the first ages of Christianity down to the present day.* Nor do I see how a particular church can now be properly formed, without adopting some creed or confession of faith, as the bond of their union in the faith and practice of the gospel. At least, I cannot see how a church which has no such bond of union, can consistently refuse or exclude any from their communion who profess to believe the Bible, though they deny all the essential doctrines of the Christian religion.

8. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then it is proper and necessary, that ministers should examine those whom they approbate to preach the gospel, respecting their belief of the fundamental principles of Christianity. Ministers are set for the defence of the gospel; and, in order to discharge this duty, they ought, as far as possible, to keep out of the ministry all such as would pervert the gospel of Christ. The right of ordaining others to preach the gospel gives them a right of inquiring into their religious sentiments. And this right involves an obligation to use all proper means of knowing whether they are properly established in the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel. Nor can they be faithful to Christ, nor to themselves, nor to candidates, nor to the souls of men, if, through fear, or favor, or negligence, they introduce those into the ministry who are disposed to wrest the scriptures to their own and others' destruction. To guard them against this, the apostle charges them to "lay hands suddenly on no man," and to commit the gospel to faithful men, who are able to teach others also. It is an alarming cir-

* See Dunlap on Creeds.

cumstance, at this day, that ministers have become so remiss in examining candidates for the work of the ministry. They not only approbate them to preach, but even ordain them to the pastoral charge, without the least examination of their religious principles. And some boast of this conduct, under the noble idea of liberality of sentiment. It deserves, however, serious consideration, whether it will appear in this light in the view of Him who hath set them for the defence of the gospel.

9. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then, if ministers neglect to preach the doctrines of grace, they neglect to preach the gospel. We may preach many real and important truths, while we neglect to preach the doctrines of grace. But while we neglect to preach these, our sermons, however elegantly composed and gracefully delivered, are no better than the empty declamations of heathen moralists. Socrates taught the existence of the Deity, the immortality of the soul, and its happy or miserable state after death. Cicero beautifully described and inculcated justice, veracity, temperance, and all the moral and social virtues. Seneca read solemn lectures upon the vanity of the world, the deformity of vice, and the wisdom and importance of improving time, and preparing for eternity. If we preach the same doctrines and duties upon the same natural principles, we deserve the name of heathen, rather than Christian preachers.

But this is not the worst; for, while we confine our preaching to these duties and doctrines of natural religion, we betray the cause of Christianity, and rob our people of the knowledge of those doctrines of grace which alone are able to make them wise unto salvation. If we neglect therefore to preach the doctrines of grace, we are unspeakably worse than no preachers at all. Our people had much better be left alone, with the Bible in their hands: peradventure they may read, understand, believe, and be saved. But if we preach, every Sabbath, something directly contrary to the genius and spirit of the gospel, we take the most effectual method to deceive and ruin their souls for ever. Error, according to the inspired writers, has as great a tendency to destroy, as truth has to save the souls of men. Christ compares error to leaven, and Paul compares it to a canker, or gangrene. Error is the same to the soul, that poison is to the body. As a small degree of poison will injure the body, so a small degree of error will injure the soul. And as a large degree of poison will destroy the body, so a large degree of error will destroy the soul. It is as dangerous and fatal, therefore, to preach a system of error to our people, as to inculcate a course of practical vice and immorality; for either will directly tend to destroy both their souls and ours for ever.

Hence, says our Lord, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

10. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then none who are friendly to grace, can be really unfriendly to the doctrines of grace. Some who profess to be very friendly to grace, appear open and bitter enemies to the doctrines of grace. But how is this consistent? If they are really pleased with grace, why should they not be as much pleased with the doctrines of grace. To be pleased with grace, is to be pleased with the character of God in damning sinners for the least violation of his holy and righteous law. Whoever can see a beauty in this part of the divine character, can see a beauty in divine grace. And whoever can see a beauty in divine grace, can see a beauty in the doctrines of grace. For all the doctrines of grace grow out of, or unite with this single truth, that God is amiable and glorious in the displays of his punitive justice. How then can those who love this divine truth, hate and oppose the doctrine of election, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of unconditional submission, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, or any other of the doctrines of grace? Is there any thing more displeasing in these doctrines, than in the doctrine of eternal destruction for the least sin? Or if there be any grace in God's saving sinners from complete and endless ruin, is there not as much grace in those doctrines which immediately flow from this source? None therefore who really love the grace of God in the salvation of sinners, can understandingly hate and oppose the doctrines of grace. Here, however, I beg leave to borrow the words of a late pious and elegant writer, who has set this subject in a clear and striking light. "Believe me, my dear friend, salvation, both in its root and all its branches, is entirely of grace; or else believe me, for the many cogent testimonies of scripture, which most circumstantially ascertain this great truth. Election is of grace; 'Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children,' not on account of human worthiness, but 'according to the good pleasure of his will.' Equally gratuitous is our effectual vocation; 'God hath called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace.' Faith is owing to the same cause; 'By grace are ye saved through faith.' From hence springs justification; 'Being justified freely by his grace.' This is the origin of regeneration; 'Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth.' The consummation of bliss flows from the same all supplying cause; 'The gift of God is eternal life.' It is in every respect a gift; the superstructure is reared by the hand of grace; and when the top stone is brought forth, when our felicity is com-

pleted in the kingdom of heaven, the everlasting acclamation will be, 'Grace, grace, unto it.' This is that glorious gospel, which human learning could never have discovered; which carnal reason cannot understand; which the wisdom of this world accounteth foolishness; which the envy of the devil, and the pride of man will always oppose."

You will now permit me, my hearers, to bring this subject home to our own bosoms, and ask this serious question: Do we oppose the gospel?

In particular, Do we who profess to be ministers of the gospel, oppose it? This is possible. For we are by nature children of wrath, even as others. We have naturally a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. We naturally hate the doctrines of grace, as much as other men. But if we neglect to preach these doctrines because we hate them, or if we neglect to preach them because others hate them, or if we preach them while our own hearts rise against them, how unspeakably guilty are we in the sight of our divine Master! Let us then settle this question, which it concerns us more than any other in the world to settle: Do we love that glorious gospel which we are solemnly bound to study every day, and to preach every Sabbath, with supreme affection and delight?

Nor is this question uninteresting to him, who is this day to lay himself under the most solemn obligations "to testify the gospel of the grace of God." How much does it concern him to be established in the faith and in the love of the gospel! In this, his own soul and the souls of this people are deeply interested. Let him therefore be entreated to take heed unto himself, and unto his doctrines, and continue in them; that he may both save himself and them that hear him.

And may this church and congregation inquire, whether they are willing to receive the grace of God in truth. The man who is now to be set over them in the Lord, will, we trust, come to them in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of grace. We beseech them therefore not to receive the grace of God in vain. If he plainly and faithfully preaches the doctrines of grace, they will be a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death to your souls. Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.

And let us all who are present on this solemn occasion, take heed, lest we reject the gospel of the grace of God. Our divine and gracious Redeemer hath forewarned both ministers and people of their imminent danger. "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." "Whosoever shall fall upon that stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

SERMON IV.

COUNSEL OF GOD.

AN ORDINATION SERMON.

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. — Acts, xx 27.

The apostle makes this declaration under peculiar circumstances, which carry the strongest evidence of sincerity. He is taking his final leave of those to whom he had preached the gospel with saving success. They expect never to see his face again, nor he theirs, until they meet in the world of spirits, before the Supreme Judge. In this situation he solemnly calls upon them to bear testimony to his ministerial faithfulness. "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." This seems to be the spirit of the apostle's appeal: "I know, and you know, and the Searcher of my heart knows, that I have faithfully preached the gospel among you; for instead of using any mean arts or subterfuges to conceal the truth, I have laid open the whole scheme of redemption, with all possible freedom and plainness."

As this declaration breathes the true spirit of a faithful minister, so it naturally leads us to show, in this discourse, that faithful ministers mean to preach the whole counsel of God.

Paul was a faithful minister. He loved that gospel, which he once hated. He admired that divine Saviour, whom he once persecuted. He espoused that glorious cause, which he once opposed. His former views and affections being totally changed by divine grace, he was prompted to preach the gospel from an ardent desire to promote the Redeemer's kingdom, and increase the number of his cordial subjects. He knew nothing more desirable, than to be instrumental in turning men from

darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. He was willing to spend and be spent for the salvation of sinners. He was willing to sacrifice the most promising earthly prospects, and to endure the heaviest load of evils that the world could heap upon him, for the sake of Christ and the good of souls. He felt, therefore, no inclination to handle the word of God deceitfully, but sincerely desired, by the manifestation of the truth, to approve himself to his own and to every man's conscience, in the sight of God.

This was Paul's character. And this is the character of all faithful ministers. They all have the same spirit, act from the same motives, and pursue the same objects. There is, therefore, no occasion to spend time in proving that faithful ministers mean to preach as the apostle Paul did. This point is sufficiently clear from their Christian character. The only thing here that needs to be considered, is, how they preach so as to declare the whole counsel of God. This, indeed, deserves particular attention. And upon this let me observe,

1. That faithful ministers, in preaching the gospel, trace it up to its original source and fountain head.

The gospel is not an emanation of the divine *nature*, but a fruit of the divine *will*. God is a voluntary agent. He acts of choice, not of constraint. His nature lays him under no natural necessity of acting, or producing any effects out of himself. Had it been agreeable to his will, he might have existed, from eternity unto eternity, without giving being to any created object. His nature, therefore, by no means obliged him to give existence to men, and much less to give his Son to die for them, after they had forfeited every mark of his favor. Hence it appears plain and obvious, that the gospel of divine grace must have been a perfectly free and voluntary scheme, which the Supreme Being devised, determined, and adjusted in all its parts, before the foundation of the world. For God is a wise as well as a voluntary agent. And every wise, voluntary agent always forms his plan, before he begins to operate. The general concerts his scheme, before he orders his army to march. The master of the ship determines his course, before he launches into the mighty deep. And the architect draws a complete plan of his intended work, before he shapes his materials, or begins to put them together. So the only wise God, the Creator and Governor of the world, voluntarily determined and adjusted the whole scheme of redemption, before he brought men, the intended subjects of it, into existence. The schemes of men are often imperfect, because they determine the end, without determining and securing the means. But no such imperfection ever attends the divine counsels. God determines

the means as well as the end, and binds them together by an invincible connection. The gospel, therefore, as it lay in the divine mind from eternity, was one uniform, consistent, perfect scheme.

Accordingly, faithful ministers, in preaching the gospel, mean to trace it up to this original source and fountain head. So Paul tells us he preached. "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." And in his writings, he appears to make a point of illustrating this leading and capital idea of the gospel. Permit me to read you a passage to this purpose, in his epistle to the Ephesians. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The apostle here represents the gospel of God as the mystery of his will, as the good pleasure of his will, as the choice, the counsel, and purpose of his will, which he purposed in himself, before the foundation of the world. He is so far from aiming to conceal the original and eternal source of the gospel, that he uses a great variety of similar terms, to make it plain and intelligible to every capacity that the gospel took its origin from the voluntary purpose and design of God, which he completely formed and established in his own mind in the early ages of eternity. And every faithful minister means, in the same manner, to trace the gospel up to its fountain head, and so declare the whole counsel of God.

2. Faithful ministers mean to preach the gospel in its full latitude and extent.

The gospel is very extensive. It comprehends all the designs of the Creator. It is, strictly speaking, the sum and comprehension of all the divine purposes. Though the designs of God in creation and providence are very numerous and complicated, yet, numerous and complicated as they are, the gospel contains them all. They are all but so many constituent and necessary parts of the one great design of redeeming love. When God concerted the scheme of redemption through the mediation of

Christ, he fixed on the works of creation and providence as the means to carry into effect this supreme and ultimate object. In this extensive view, the apostle frequently considers and represents the gospel. Speaking of the purpose of God in the work of redemption, he says, Ephesians i. 10, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." This intimates that Christ, in his mediatorial character, is the grand centre of union and of blessedness among both men and angels.

In the third chapter of this same epistle he says again, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ: And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." This passage exhibits the gospel scheme of redemption as that which lay a mystery or secret in the divine mind from eternity; as that which constituted the Lord Jesus Christ the Saviour of sinners; and, in a word, as that which comprehends all the manifold wisdom of God, which ever has been, and ever will be displayed in the works of creation, providence and grace.

This same apostle, in another place, gives us a still more full and particular representation of the universal extent of the gospel scheme. The text I advert to is in the first chapter of Colossians. These are the words: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature: For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist: And he is the head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preëminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in

heaven." Hence we are expressly told that all things, visible and invisible, from the highest seraph to the lowest insect, from the largest globe to the smallest atom, were universally created not only by Christ, but for him; that is, to promote and accomplish the great work of redemption, which shall finally terminate in the complete union and blessedness of all holy beings. Such is the length, and breadth, and magnitude of the gospel scheme. It involves all the divine counsels, and all created natures and objects. And in order to declare the whole counsel of God, it is necessary to exhibit the gospel in this wide and comprehensive latitude and extent. This leads me to observe once more,

3. That faithful ministers mean to preach the gospel in all its full and final effects.

We have just now observed that the gospel is a great and extensive scheme, which takes in all intelligent natures, and comprises all the counsels and operations of God towards them, through every period of their existence. It must, therefore, most essentially and universally affect all their views and feelings for ever. It has, indeed, already deeply affected them. All the events which have hitherto taken place, in carrying forward this gracious design, have produced great and lasting effects in the minds of both good and evil spirits in this and other worlds. The solemn scenes which are this day passing before us may perhaps as much engage the attention, and as sensibly impress the minds of invisible as of visible beings. But however inattentive and unaffected we or they may be on this occasion, yet we should do well to remember that all these steps which we are now taking, as well as all those which have been taken, to promote the work of redemption, will eventually and eternally affect every intelligent creature. And this great and extensive scheme will have a growing influence upon the whole intellectual system, from age to age, to its final accomplishment. Heaven, earth and hell will be deeply affected by the general conversion of Jews and Gentiles; by the destruction of the power and authority of the Man of sin; by the restraints which shall be laid upon the malice and influence of Satan; and by the universal dominion which shall be given to the people of God for a thousand years together. But when God shall judge the secrets of men, as the apostle says, according to my gospel, then, and not till then, its full effects will be universally seen, and universally felt. Then it will appear that the gospel, in its rise, progress, and final issue, fixed the states and formed the characters of all the inhabitants of heaven and of hell: and that these amazing effects of it will not be transient and momentary,

but permanent as the throne of God, and interminable as the ages of eternity.

Thus all faithful ministers, after the example of the great apostle, mean to lay open the gospel scheme in its original source, universal extent, and final influence and effect upon the whole intelligent creation. And by this mode of preaching they do, in the highest and best sense of our text, declare the whole counsel of God.

I now proceed to make a few reflections upon the subject we have been considering.

1. Faithful ministers never lose sight of the gospel in their preaching. All their discourses breathe an evangelical spirit. They treat every subject which they have occasion to consider, in a gospel strain. Not that they confine their attention to one nor even to a few subjects; for they studiously aim at a rich variety in the course of their preaching. But whatever subject they undertake to handle, they explain it upon gospel principles, and enforce it by gospel motives. For they consider the gospel as including all the doctrines and duties of religion. Accordingly they never treat any subject as totally detached from the general system of Christianity. They never preach mere philosophy, nor mere metaphysics, nor mere morality. If they treat of the being and perfections of God; if they treat of the works of creation and providence; if they treat of the powers and faculties of the human soul; if they treat of the social and relative duties of life; they consider all these subjects as so many branches of the one, comprehensive scheme of the gospel. For they determine, with the apostle Paul, not to know any thing among their people save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Hence, when they preach upon the inward exercises and affections of the heart, they represent love, repentance, humility, submission, sobriety, &c. not as moral virtues, but as Christian graces. And when they discourse upon moral topics, they inculcate the duties of rulers and subjects, of parents and children, of masters and servants, by motives and obligations drawn from the precepts and sanctions of the gospel. So that all their public discourses are peculiarly suited to awaken and convince sinners, and to quicken and edify saints; and, of course, to carry into execution the great and benevolent design of the Christian system. Hence faithful ministers eminently merit the distinguishing character of gospel preachers.

2. Faithful ministers dwell largely upon some particular doctrines which others silently pass over, or but rarely mention in their public instructions. They say much about God's design in the creation of the world. They insist that he aims supremely and ultimately at his own glory in all his works. They

say much about the perfection of the divine plan. They insist that it is, of all possible ones, absolutely the best. They say much about the evils which are found in the divine system. They insist that God makes them all sometimes the means, and always the occasion, of superior good. They say much about the divine supremacy. They insist that God is concerned in all events, and guides all the views, designs, and voluntary actions of moral agents. They say much about the decrees of God. They insist that he hath chosen some to everlasting life, and predestinated others to everlasting ruin; that he hath brought both natural and moral evils into his original plan; that he hath immutably fixed the characters and conditions of all intelligent beings; that he hath established an intimate and indissoluble connection between causes and effects, means and ends, both in the natural and moral world; or, to say all in fewer words, that he hath, from eternity, fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass. They say much about the fall of man, the moral corruption of human nature, the perishing state of sinners, the grace of God in providing a Saviour, the sovereignty of God in the application of redemption, the irresistible agency of God in the renovation of the heart, and the power and faithfulness of God in the final perseverance of saints. These doctrines lie in the way of those who declare the whole counsel of God. For they grow out of the root, and spread through all the branches of the gospel. The gospel therefore cannot possibly be laid open in its original source, extensive nature, and final influence, without setting these doctrines in a full and fair light. Besides, those who declare the whole counsel of God, consider these doctrines as the nerves and sinews of the gospel, and the best adapted to awaken a sense of duty, and a spirit of devotion in the hearts and consciences of their hearers. Accordingly they make these the leading subjects of their public discourses. And though they often treat on other less interesting topics, yet they are careful to say nothing which may serve either to obscure the evidence, or weaken the importance, of these distinguishing articles of the glorious gospel.

3. We hence see why faithful ministers are so much more apt, than others, to irritate and displease men in their preaching. This difference among preachers is often observed and mentioned by their hearers, who generally entertain very different opinions about it. While some look upon it as very strange and unaccountable, others, without the least hesitation, ascribe it to the worst of causes. But we may easily discover the truth of the case, if we only attend to what has been said. Faithful ministers declare the whole counsel of God, by which they represent every thing in a disagreeable light to sinners. By open-

ing the gospel scheme, they make it appear that every creature, every object, and every event in the universe shall serve to save, or destroy the enemies of truth, just as God absolutely determined from eternity. If they treat of the divine decrees, they make this appear. If they treat of the divine sovereignty, they make this appear. If they treat of the divine agency, they make this appear. If they treat of the common course of providence, they make this appear. In short, if they treat of any other truth, they carry it so far as to make this appear. For they always treat every subject in its intimate connection with the one great scheme which comprises all the designs, all the creatures, and all the works of God. And viewed in this light, one thing is nearly as disagreeable as another to every carnal heart. Grace is as disagreeable as justice; heaven as disagreeable as hell; time as disagreeable as eternity; prosperity as disagreeable as adversity; the promises of the gospel as disagreeable as its most awful threatenings. For all these things stand equally prepared to destroy every one of those whom God designs should be finally destroyed. But some preachers never declare the whole counsel of God; and, of consequence never display any one truth, nor any one object in this full and important light. Hence they never preach any thing which is very displeasing to sinners, who are willing to hear, at least some part of the truth, about the most important subjects. In particular, they can bear to hear that God decrees some things, that he acts as sovereign in some cases, that he governs them in some respects, that he disposes of some of their interests, and indeed, that he intends to punish some of the most incorrigible of the human race, in a future state. But when they hear divine truths carried in their full latitude and extent, through all their relations and connections in the great and comprehensive scheme of redemption, their hearts rise, and they can no longer sit with ease or patience under the preached gospel. The whole truth is infinitely too much for their proud hearts to endure. It is neither strange nor new therefore, that faithful ministers should give peculiar offence to sinners, who have always been displeased with such preachers.

Paul, it must be allowed, was every way qualified to preach the gospel to the best advantage. He was a man of learning, a man of eloquence, a man of prudence, and a man deeply acquainted with human nature, and the most engaging modes of address. He very well knew how to please mankind, and he spared no pains to please them, so far as the genius of the gospel and the dictates of his own conscience would permit him to do it. This he assures us in the strongest terms. "Give none offence," says he to the Corinthians, "neither to the Jews,

nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God; even as *I please all men in all things*, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant to all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." But notwithstanding all this prudence, condescension, and winning address, the apostle highly displeased many by his preaching. When he preached at Damascus, he displeased the Jews so much that they took counsel to kill him. When he went from Damascus to Jerusalem, he there raised the resentment of some so high that they went about to slay him. At Antioch, they expelled him out of their coasts for preaching. At Thessalonica they were so exasperated at his doctrines that they beset the house where he was, with a determination to destroy him. Nor is this all; for even his friends, it seems, once forsook him for preaching too plainly. "At my first answer no man stood by me, but all men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear." These are plain facts; which carry convincing evidence that no faithful ministers can possibly exhibit divine truths, as they lie connected in the divine counsel, without giving offence to sinners. The gospel thus fully displayed, always did and always must give offence to those whose hearts and deeds are evil.

4. Faithful preachers are weighty and powerful preachers. Their discourses have a peculiar energy, which, we often see, bears down the minds of a whole assembly. Not a single person is able to resist their weight and influence. This is not so much owing to the manner of their speaking, as to the importance and perspicuity of what they deliver. They plainly and fully lay open the gospel scheme, and thereby lay open the nature and importance of all created and uncreated objects, as they stand connected with it. And this at once gives both meaning and weight to every expression they use. Accordingly, when they speak of God, they are understood to mean that Being who exists of himself, who determines all events, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, and who carries in his hand the eternal interests of the whole

creation. When they speak of the law of God, they are understood to mean a law which requires perfect obedience, on pain of his eternal displeasure. When they speak of the justice of God, they are understood to mean that justice which will doom all the finally impenitent to endless perdition. When they speak of the mercy of God, they are understood to mean that sovereign mercy which saves one sinner, and which leaves another to perish in his sins for ever. When they speak of love to God, they are understood to mean that impartial, universal disinterested charity, which never seeks her own, but always prefers the divine glory and the general good to the personal happiness of any individual. When they speak of submission to God, they are understood to mean absolute, unconditional submission. When they speak of obedience to the divine commands, they are understood to mean nothing short of true holiness. When they speak of regeneration, they are understood to mean the renovation of the heart by the Divine Spirit. When they speak of saints, they are understood to mean the elect of God, vessels of mercy, and heirs of glory. And when they speak of sinners, they are understood to mean totally depraved, guilty, hell deserving creatures, who are constantly exposed to eternal destruction. In short, let them treat on what subject they will, their meaning is both plain and important; which gives a peculiar weight and energy to every word they speak.

Besides, they have the advantage of speaking under the united weight and influence of the whole of the divine system. As they consider every subject in connection with the whole counsel of God, so the whole counsel of God seems to be more or less brought into view by every subject they handle, which necessarily gives it additional force and solemnity. For the whole counsel of God inseparably connects time and eternity, heaven and hell, all worlds, and all beings in the universe. And every truth exhibited in such a connection as this, must appear unspeakably weighty and solemn to every discerning mind. Hence the preaching has a superior power to seize the hearts and consciences of men; and the gospel as it falls from their lips, falls, as our Saviour says, like a weighty stone, which will grind every opposer to powder. Hence,

5. It is of vast importance that those who undertake to preach the gospel, should make it appear as it really is, one great, comprehensive, and perfectly connected scheme. This is the apostolic mode of preaching; and this is the best mode of preaching that ministers can possibly pursue. There is no other, as we have just observed, which will give their discourses such a superior weight and solemnity. But besides this advantage,

they will derive many others of equal importance, from exhibiting the full import and extent of the gospel.

One is, They will preach much more consistently. This is a point worthy of their particular and constant attention. For consistency is the beauty and ornament, if not the essence of good preaching. And this arises from considering the relation which one truth bears to another, and which each bears to the whole counsel of God. While preachers lay open this uniform scheme, they are obliged to keep the general connection of divine truths in view; which will naturally produce a beautiful consistency through all their discourses. But, whenever they explode systems, and despise forms in preaching, they are perpetually liable to fall into the grossest contradiction and absurdities. And indeed we find this too often exemplified. A series of inconsistency runs through the whole course of some men's preaching. They not only contradict in one discourse what they have said in another, but they say and unsay, assert and deny, the same things in the same discourse. Such inconsistency is very disagreeable and detrimental in preaching. It strengthens infidels, and wounds the feelings of believers. And therefore, to avoid this, it is of absolute importance that ministers should preach the whole counsel of God.

Again: They must preach in this manner, if they wish to distinguish themselves from false teachers, who corrupt the gospel, and destroy the souls of men. Such teachers, amidst all their follies and absurdities, always preach some truth, but not the whole truth. The best way, therefore, to expose their errors and to defeat their influence, is, to preach the whole truth, or declare the whole counsel of God, which contains that perfectly uniform and consistent scheme of religion, which stands opposed to all the dreams and delusions of weak and wicked men. If any preacher will only lay open the great design, the full extent, and final operation of the gospel, he will effectually distinguish his character, and convince every hearer that he is no Arminian, no Antinomian, no Socinian, no Arian, no Universalist, no Deist. And surely every faithful minister must feel the importance of distinguishing himself from the various species of heretics, in order to discountenance error, and throw the whole weight of his influence into the scale of truth.

Again: By preaching the whole counsel of God, ministers will convey the largest portion of knowledge to their hearers. Those preachers who perpetually swim upon the surface of the gospel, never teach their people any real knowledge of the great system of Christianity. For no subject in divinity can be said to be really known, without being known in its

various connections with the other branches of divinity, and with the general scheme of divine grace. But superficial preachers, who never lay open the gospel as one great, uniform, consistent design, never represent one doctrine of religion in its full and proper connection. Hence they never convey much real instruction to their hearers, by their vague and indeterminate preaching. But those who declare the whole counsel of God are always instructive. They truly enlighten the minds, and enlarge the views of their hearers, by every sermon they preach. For, in every discourse, they farther unfold some part of the great design of the Deity. And after their hearers have once become acquainted with the general scheme of the gospel, they will receive instruction with peculiar ease and avidity. Common people are capable of understanding the gospel, if it be plainly and fully exhibited. Their ignorance, therefore, which is so often complained of, is more owing to a want of opportunity than to a want of capacity or disposition to learn. Let ministers only declare the whole counsel of God, and it will soon appear, that their people are very ready and very able to understand the gospel.

Once more: Ministers must declare not only the truth, but the whole truth in their preaching, if they mean to be faithful either to themselves, or to their people. So Paul thought. "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." He sincerely aimed to represent God, and Christ, and heaven, and hell, and all beings, and all objects, in the very same light in which he really expected they would finally appear, at the winding up of the glorious gospel. By this mode of preaching, he told his hearers the truth, and the whole truth; and so did all that lay in his power to save them from ruin, and to raise them to happiness. This was real faithfulness to them, and to himself. And this accordingly gave him inward peace and satisfaction of mind, and made him feel that he had been an honest and faithful minister of Christ. If ministers then, wish to be pure from the blood of all men, and to gain the approbation of God and of their own minds, they must declare, with fidelity and plainness, the whole counsel of God. Nothing short of this can entitle them to the present character and future rewards of the faithful.

I now beg leave, according to a long established custom on these occasions, to apply this discourse to my Fathers and Brethren in the ministry.

Reverend Sirs,—My subject suggests one distinguishing mark of ministerial fidelity. And it deeply concerns us to inquire and determine, whether we have this mark in our favor. Let us then seriously ask, and permit conscience to answer,

such questions as these — Have we really intended to declare the whole counsel of God, without the least ambiguity or reserve? Have we honestly endeavored, as far as our opportunities and abilities would permit, to make our people know all that we know about the gospel, which comprises all the designs and operations of the Deity. Some, we have reason to fear, never mean to let their people know their religious sentiments, from the day of their ordination to the day of their death. And their people never will know them, until the gospel shall disclose the secrets of all men before the judgment seat of Christ. There is reason to fear this from a fact which, I believe, many wish to conceal, but which, I presume, none will dare to deny. The fact alluded to is this. The people are much more Calvinistic in their religious principles than the ministers are. There is, perhaps, scarcely a congregation in New England, where the majority are not friendly to our shorter Catechism, and the leading doctrines of the gospel, as they are explained and maintained by Calvinistic divines. But are there not many ministers, who totally explode this scheme of doctrines; and embrace opinions which are absolutely inconsistent with any system of religion, which takes its origin from the eternal purpose or decree of God? And do not such ministers as these make use of every art and subterfuge to conceal their sentiments? Do they not preach in a dark, ambiguous, desultory manner, lest their characters should be distinguished from other men's, and their principles from the true principles of the gospel?

Are we thus, my Fathers and Brethren? — are we of this number, who thus shun to appear in their true characters, and to become transparent to the view of the world? If we are honest men, we have nothing to fear from the light. There is a dignity in transparency, which universally commands esteem and respect. But there is a meanness which wants a name, in a minister's flying to shelters or subterfuges, to hide himself from the public eye. Shall we then, my Brethren, who are the salt of the earth, who are the light of the world, and who hold the torch of divine truth to dispel the clouds of darkness and error from the paths of men; — shall we put out our light, or hide it under a bushel? No: let us trim our lamps, and make them shine, that those who are blind may see, and those who see may be blind.

Our subject next speaks to him, who is this day to commence a steward of the mysteries of God.

Dear Sir, — We have endeavored, in this discourse, to display the nature and importance of a minister's duty, with a particular view to your benefit on this solemn occasion. And if the

gospel has taken possession of your own heart, there is nothing which you more ardently wish, than to unfold its divine mysteries for the instruction and salvation of sinners. This important, this delightful service, God seems about to assign you. Such a distinguishing privilege demands your most grateful acceptance, and most faithful improvement. The work indeed is great. And it must appear great to you, if your mind is awake, and looks forward to the final issue of the gospel; which will eventually fix your own soul, and the souls of your hearers in a state of endless joy or endless wo. But having once put your hand to the plow, you must never look back. Your cause is the cause of God and of all holy beings, which therefore must never be deserted. You may expect to be called to great and constant exertions. You must read much, think much, pray much, watch much, deny yourself much, if you wish to possess that knowledge and fortitude, which will enable you to declare the whole counsel of God. This mode of preaching always tends to awaken the enmity and opposition of the human heart, and to raise the resentment and obloquy of sinners against the faithful ministers of Christ. You may therefore lay your account, that some will become your enemies, because you tell them the truth. But let none of these things move you, neither count any object too dear to be sacrificed in the cause of truth. For the value and importance of every created object, is to be estimated according to its tendency to accomplish the gospel scheme; which contains all that is truly valuable to you, or to any other intelligent being. You have nothing to lose therefore by promoting the gospel, which will effectually secure the present and future interests of all its friends. Only take good care of the gospel, and the gospel will take good care of you.

Be entreated then to preach with all possible plainness and freedom. Unbosom yourself to your people. Let them see your heart. Make them feel more or less, in every sermon, the united influence and weight of the whole counsel of God. Aim your discourses directly at their hearts and consciences. And endeavor, if possible, to make them see and feel the gospel, just as they must all see and feel it, at the day of judgment. This is your wisdom, as well as duty. For, please to remember, if you conceal the gospel, the gospel will not conceal you. If you neglect to declare the whole counsel of God, the whole counsel of God shall yet be declared; and, among other dreadful secrets, your unfaithfulness shall be declared before your people, and before the whole assembled universe. Hence says our Lord to his ministers, "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I

tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house tops." Your time is short. You must soon, at longest, take a final leave of the dear people of your charge. If you are unfaithful, how can you bear to leave them? Your conscience will forbid you to say, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." And if you cannot bear to leave them, how can you bear to meet them before the supreme tribunal; where the gospel will appear infinitely different from what you represented, and from what they expected? But, on the other hand, if you plainly and faithfully declare the whole counsel of God, you will make the gospel appear in the same light in which it will appear to you, to your people, and to all intelligences at the great and last day. And be assured that that day, however tremendous to others, shall be joyful to you; for that day shall fully reveal, and completely reward your fidelity.

I have only to address one word to the church and people in this place.

Brethren and Friends,— If the gospel involves all your interests for time and eternity, if it must sooner or later be fully known and sensibly felt by every immortal soul among you, can you desire to have it concealed from your knowledge? Can you wish to be deceived in a point of such infinite weight and magnitude? Let me therefore earnestly entreat each of you to adopt the language of good old Eli to the young prophet Samuel, who was sent to him with a heavy message from heaven. "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me; God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee."

SERMON V.

MINISTERS WHOLLY GIVEN TO THEIR WORK.

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REV. ELIAS DUDLEY, TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE CHURCH IN OXFORD, APRIL 13, 1791.

Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them. — 1 Timothy, iv. 15.

The apostle having given, in the course of this epistle, a variety of instructions to Timothy, finally sums up the whole in the words I have read. "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them." Which is as much as to say, "Though I have given you many and various warnings and directions respecting your office, yet all these may be comprised in this short and comprehensive injunction, Give thyself wholly to the ministry." Agreeably, therefore, to the spirit of the text and the business of the present occasion, we shall endeavor to illustrate this general truth, — that ministers must give themselves wholly to their work.

In order to set this subject in a plain and practical light, I shall consider *how* ministers must give themselves wholly to their work; and then suggest several reasons *why* they must give themselves wholly to it.

The work of the ministry is a great and arduous work. This appears from the various appellations which the scripture gives to those who undertake it. Ministers are called laborers and soldiers, to denote the exertions and fatigue which attend their work. They are called overseers and watchmen, to intimate the care and concern which accompany their office. They are called shepherds, and pastors, and teachers, and stewards, to signify the various duties of leading, of guiding, and instructing

the people of their charge. A work which contains so many and so important branches of duty, must be a very difficult and laborious work, and, of course, must require those who undertake it, to give themselves wholly to it. But how ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, is the point which falls first under consideration.

And here I shall begin with observing,

I. That ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by giving their *hearts* to it.

No man ever gives himself wholly to any business to which his heart is opposed. No man, therefore, ever gives himself wholly to the ministry, while his heart disrelishes the duties and designs of that sacred employment. The minister, then, who gives himself wholly to his work, loves the gospel and feels heartily engaged to promote its great and important designs. He pursues the ministry, "not of constraint, but willingly;" not because no other business happens to fall in his way, but because there is no other business in the world to which his heart is so much attached. He loves his work. He enjoys a pleasure in discharging every branch of duty which belongs to his office. Christ, as a preacher, gave himself wholly to his work. Accordingly, we find him pursuing it with pleasure and delight. He came weary and faint to Jacob's well, but yet he chose to feed and nourish the souls of others, rather than to feed and nourish his own body. For while his disciples went to procure refreshment, he sat down and taught the woman of Samaria, with saving success. And when they returned and invited him to eat, he replied, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

Paul likewise gave his heart so much to the ministry, as to esteem it a great and distinguishing privilege. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord," says he, "who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." His life was bound up in his work. This he intimates to the Thessalonians. "Brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress, by your faith. For we now live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." And as his benevolent heart was filled with joy at the prospect of men's being saved, so it was wounded with sorrow and deep distress at the prospect of their being lost. Hence he says to the Jews, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." The truth and sincerity of this declaration appears from another, still more solemn and striking. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my

kinsmen according to the flesh." Nor did he feel less tenderness and concern for those in Galatia, whom he addresses with more than paternal affection. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." Such are the feelings of those who give themselves wholly to the ministry. Their hearts are so absorbed in their work, that it becomes the source of their highest joys and deepest sorrows.

2. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by giving their *thoughts* to it.

This the apostle plainly suggests in the text. "Meditate upon these things." Men always meditate upon their supreme object of pursuit. That to which any person wholly devotes himself, naturally engrosses all his thoughts and attention. His mind is perpetually recurring to it, and with difficulty is diverted from it. It follows him into all places and into all companies, and directs the whole course of his conduct. The husbandman, who gives himself wholly to his calling, employs his thoughts more than his hands in his daily business. This lies upon his mind not only in the hours of labor, but in moments of leisure. He is perpetually thinking and contriving how to plan and perform his business with the greatest ease and despatch. He has his fields, his pastures and meadows in habitual contemplation, and racks his invention to discover the best modes of cultivation and improvement. He lays himself out to provide laborers and all necessary implements to carry on his work. In short, his business employs his thoughts when he lies down, and when he rises up; when he goes out, and when he comes in; when he is at home, and when he is abroad.

So the minister of the gospel should give all his thoughts and attention to his work. He should meditate upon the nature and importance of his business, as well as upon his own peculiar gifts and talents, in order to discover the best rules and modes of conduct for him to observe, in the discharge of his office. He should often reflect upon the circumstances, connections and movements of his people, and endeavor to learn, as far as possible, the peculiar genius, disposition, character and capacity, of each individual. He should watch the most favorable seasons of giving them advice, instruction, consolation and reproof. He should attentively eye the hand of God, that the voice of his discourses may follow the voice of God in his providence. He should lay himself out in his work, and be always studying to furnish himself more and more for every branch of his office. He should embrace every opportunity of acquainting himself with the most perfect and best approved models of preaching, and provide all the helps which he can possibly obtain, both from men and from books. In a word,

his eyes, his ears, his heart should be always open to any thing and to every thing, which can either assist or encourage him in his sacred employment.

3. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by giving their *studies* to it.

The apostle exhorts Timothy to "give attendance to reading." This includes study and thinking, and every mode of intellectual improvement. Ministers should be men of reading and close application. They cannot carry their studies and researches too far, provided they neither injure their health, nor infringe upon the other branches of their duty. But they, like all other men, should always read with a particular reference to their own profession. The farmer, the merchant, the politician and the minister, may read the same books, and read them with equal advantage, if each will read with a direct view to his own particular calling. Ministers may read any book, they may study any subject, which can serve to furnish them for the duties of their office. This should be their invariable and ultimate object in reading both sacred and profane authors.

They are to read the scriptures, and examine every chapter, every verse, and every word; not merely to direct their own faith and practice, but to direct the faith and practice of others. They are to read the various systems of divinity; not merely to know the various opinions of men, but to discover and maintain the truth in opposition to error. They are to read philosophy; not merely to shine in that particular science, but to enlarge their views of the works and character of the great Jehovah. They are to read metaphysics; not merely to learn the art of sophistry, but to be able to meet the enemies of truth upon their own ground, and with their own weapons. They are to read history; not merely to know what has happened in the several ages of the world, but to discover the hand of God and the heart of man, in all the revolutions of time. They are to read politics; not merely to become politicians, but to be able to explain and inculcate the various duties of all ranks and classes of men. They are to read deep and well written tragedies; not merely to gratify their taste and consume their time, but to discover the secrets of human nature, and the nearest passages to the human heart. They are to read the most elegant writers in general; not merely to gain flowers to adorn their subjects, but to supply them with the best words and with the best images, to illustrate the sentiments which they wish to inculcate. These spoils, taken from the enemies of truth, they may lawfully employ in the service of God; just as he employed the spoils of his enemies to furnish his tabernacle and temple, and to clothe his priests. And indeed if they do give themselves

wholly to their work, they will consecrate all their literary acquisitions and improvements to the work of the sanctuary.

4. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by devoting all their *time* to it.

They may employ their whole time in their work; because it is a work which may be done, not only on the first and the last, but on every day of the week. In this respect, it is a peculiar employment. Other men are required to labor only six days in seven; but ministers are obliged to spend all their time in the discharge of their office. When God consecrated the tribe of Levi to the priesthood, he consecrated all their time to his service. He discharged them from labor, from war and from government, and required them to pursue their sacred work without interruption and without intermission. A minister's time is all consecrated and devoted time. He has none, therefore, to spend in idleness, in secular employments, or in any pursuits foreign from his own profession. Nor will he find the least occasion of using any of these methods of consuming, or rather, of killing time, if he only fulfils the duties of his office.

Ministers, indeed, should be frugal of time. They should divide it properly, and devote each part to some particular branch of their duty. They should live by rule. They should set apart particular days to particular studies; and particular parts of days to particular duties; and uniformly pursue their stated method, as far as unforeseen duties and avocations will permit. Dr. Doddridge, Mr. Edwards, and other great and useful divines, divided, devoted and employed all their time to the best advantage. Ministers cannot be said, therefore, to give themselves wholly to their work, unless they devote the whole of their time to it. Their divine Master was diligent and indefatigable in his work, and devoted all his time to the ministry. And to justify his conduct, made an observation which all his ministers have particular reason always to remember and regard: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."

5. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by giving all their *interests* to it.

The apostles and primitive ministers were obliged to do this literally. They would not have been the ministers of Christ, without literally following his injunction, to forsake all that they had. They did, therefore, actually take the spoiling of their goods joyfully, and give up all their temporal interests, for the sake of fulfilling the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus. But though it seldom happens in these days, that ministers are called in providence to sacrifice all their secular

interests to the work of the ministry, yet doubtless some such cases may possibly happen; and whenever they do, it is still the duty of ministers to part with all for the sake of preaching the gospel.

Not to insist, however, on such extraordinary cases, I would go on to observe that every minister is called, at least, to make all his worldly interests subservient to his holy and divine employment. He should plan all his secular affairs so as to render them the least embarrassing and the most useful to his main business. He should aim, in all his worldly concerns, not to become rich in wealth, but to become rich in grace, rich in knowledge, rich in good works. His dress, his house, his furniture, his farm, should carry the marks of usefulness as his ultimate and supreme object. If other men are willing to sacrifice their wealth to their honor, or to their pleasure, surely ministers may be willing to devote their's to the duties of their office. Affluence is more detrimental to ministers, than to any other order of men. It directly tends to divert their thoughts, to interrupt their studies, to chill their devotions, to weaken their exertions, and to corrupt their hearts. They in particular, therefore, are charged "not to be greedy of filthy lucre." Money destroyed one of the apostles, and two of the primitive professors. And how many ministers and churches have been destroyed by it since, the corruptions of Rome and of the whole Christian world, will abundantly testify. Ministers then must make their work their ultimate, and their interest only a subordinate end.

6. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by making their *secret devotions* subservient to it.

They should give themselves to reading, meditation, prayer and self examination; and in all these secret devotions have a particular reference to their public office. They should read devotional parts of scripture, and other devotional books, in order to keep their hearts in a proper frame, to discharge the devout and solemn duties which belong to their holy and sacred calling. The book of Psalms, the history of Christ and the apostles, and the epistles to Timothy and Titus, are peculiarly suited to warm, to animate and to solemnize the minds of ministers. These therefore, they should peruse often, and with great attention, in the hours of retirement. For the same purpose, they should read the lives of great and good men, who were eminent for activity and faithfulness in the service of God. Such examples will tacitly reprove their negligence, and sensibly awaken their resolution, fortitude and zeal in the cause of Christ.

To reading they should join meditation. They should fre-

quently and seriously reflect what it is to be ministers of the gospel; what it is to be intrusted with the charge of souls; what it is to have the eternal interests of men lodged in their hands. By thus reflecting upon the nature and importance of their work, they will naturally be led to consider its obligations, duties, difficulties, and future consequences. And these again will lead them to reflect upon their own conduct; their defects and short comings in duty; their guilt, weakness and dependence; their constant need of grace, of strength, and of direction from the great Head of the church. By such meditations they should fill their mouths with arguments in prayer, that they may grow in grace, in wisdom and prudence; that they may be assisted in choosing, preparing, and delivering their public discourses; and that success may attend all their ministerial labors. In a word, they should always bear their people upon their hearts in secret, as the Jewish high priest bore the names of the children of Israel upon his breast, when he went into "the secret place of the Most High."

And to all this they should add self examination. This is the great duty of ministers, who have none to examine them but themselves. And in this duty they should have a particular respect to their ministerial character and conduct. They should lay open their hearts before the bar of conscience, and inquire, whether their public discourses have flowed from love to God and love to men; whether they have declared the whole counsel of God; whether they have watched for souls as those who must give an account; whether they have taken pleasure and satisfaction in their work; whether they have properly endured the afflictions of the gospel; in short, whether, in the general course of their conduct, they have sought to please God or to please man. Thus ministers should make all their secret devotions subservient to their public duties. And they may depend upon it, that their public duties will carry the marks of their secret devotions, and declare to the world, that "they have been with Jesus." This leads me to observe once more,

7. That ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by *living agreeably* to it.

Their lives should resemble their sacred character, and be worthy of the imitation of the best of christians. Accordingly the apostle exhorts them to be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." As they are to go before others, so they should never take a step which others may not take with safety and propriety. They should be more than free from vice; they should be virtuous. They should be more than virtuous; they should be pious. They should be more than not condemned of the

world; they should condemn the world. Their lives should be a living law to all around them. There is a certain gravity, sobriety, solemnity and circumspection, which always appear proper and beautiful in the character and deportment of a minister. This, Smith, in his "Theory of Moral Sentiments," has taken particular notice of, and represented in a striking light. "We cannot expect," says he, "the same sensibility to the gay pleasures and amusements of life in a clergyman, which we lay our account with in an officer. The man whose occupation it is, to keep the world in mind of that awful futurity which awaits them, who is to announce what may be the fatal consequences of every deviation from the rule of duty, and who is himself to set the example of the most perfect uniformity, is the messenger of tidings which cannot, in propriety, be delivered either with levity or indifference. His mind is continually occupied with what is too grand and solemn to leave any room for the impressions of those frivolous objects which fill up the attention of the dissipated and gay. We readily feel, therefore, that, independent of custom, there is a propriety in the manners which custom hath allotted to this profession; and that nothing can be more suitable to the character of a clergyman than that grave, austere and abstracted severity, which we are habituated to expect in his behavior."

Having shown, in various respects, how ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, I now proceed to suggest several reasons, why they must give themselves wholly to it.

1. And here the first reason that occurs is, that by giving themselves wholly to the ministry, they will make the duties of it more easy and pleasant.

Their work is truly great and laborious, which needs to be made as light and easy as possible. And though by giving themselves wholly to it, they will neither omit nor curtail any of its duties and labors, yet they will render these very duties and labors more pleasant and delightful. Those who give themselves wholly to the ministry, make it their supreme object; and men always pursue their supreme object with a certain degree of pleasure and satisfaction. To some men, labor is exceedingly disagreeable and irksome; but to others it is very pleasant and agreeable. The reason is, that some men give themselves wholly to their pleasures, and never labor only when absolute necessity calls. To such men their business is a burden. But to other men, who pursue their business as their chief concern, labor is agreeable and pleasant. So, to some ministers their work is their delight; but to others it is their greatest burden and aversion. Those who do not give themselves wholly to the ministry, consider their office as a toil and

fatigue, and perform its various duties as a painful drudgery. They go into their study as into a prison, and never feel themselves at liberty till they leave it and mix with the world. But those who give themselves wholly to their work, find a pleasure in reading, meditation, and retirement. They feed their own minds, while they feed their people with knowledge and understanding, and pursue their own supreme happiness, while they guide and assist their people in pursuing theirs. Their burdens, if they have any, arise not from their business, but from those incidental cares and avocations which divert them from it, or obstruct them in it. If ministers then wish to live a pleasant and agreeable life, let them give themselves wholly to their work, which will render their peculiar office their peculiar happiness.

2. Ministers should devote themselves wholly to the service of their people, because this is the wisest and best way to secure their love and respect.

We love to see a person heartily and zealously engaged for our good. This is human nature. The sick man esteems and values the physician who devotes himself to his service, and stands by him day and night, to watch his every motion, and to extend his healing hand at every call. The client is charmed with his counsel, who exerts all his ingenuity, learning and eloquence, to secure his property, or to save his life. So a people revere and respect a minister, who appears willing to spend and be spent for their eternal welfare. They prefer a warm, lively, animated preacher, to one who is cold, and unconcerned for the good of souls. Accordingly, the first thing which they most critically observe in the minister who is settled among them, is, whether he appears to devote himself wholly to their service; or whether he appears to seek some different and sinister object. And therefore the first step which wisdom and prudence dictate to him, is, to make it appear that he loves his people, and devotes himself wholly to their service. And as long as he invariably pursues their good, and makes their happiness his uniform and supreme object, he will deeply impress upon their minds a most amiable idea of his person and character, which will naturally claim and secure their inward respect and esteem. It is true, indeed, men are so corrupt and depraved, that they may imagine that a minister has become their enemy because he tells them the truth, and even hate and oppose him, for the same things for which they once respected and admired him. Christ, before he was a preacher, grew in favor with God and men; but afterwards he was sometimes applauded, and sometimes hated and opposed. And the apostle tells us that he was hated and opposed by those who once

were so passionately fond of him that they would have plucked out and given him their eyes. The same thing has often happened since, and is still to be expected. But yet it remains a truth, that the wisest and best method which a minister can possibly pursue, to gain the esteem and respect of his people, is to give himself wholly to their service.

3. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, because this will be the best security against the snares and temptations to which they are exposed.

As men, and especially as ministers, they are very much exposed to danger. For many wish to lead them into those practices which will sully their character, destroy their example, weaken their hands, and discourage their hearts. They should never, therefore, allow themselves to be idle; for this will expose them to every temptation; but industry and activity in the service of God, will be a great and constant security. The industrious man, who gives himself to his proper business from morning to night, is out of the reach of vice and immorality. So the minister, who gives himself wholly to his work, is out of the way of those snares and temptations by which loose and idle ministers are often overcome and destroyed. Nor is this all. For those who give themselves wholly to the ministry, will have no taste for vain company, insipid conversation, fashionable amusements, and refined vices. They will carry about with them a constant and deep rooted aversion to the manners and spirit of the world. And of this the world will be so fully convinced, that they will never dare to solicit their company in parties of pleasure, amusement, and vice. If ministers then wish, and they certainly ought to wish, to escape the temptations and pollutions of the world, let them firmly resolve to give themselves wholly to their work. For this will be a strong and constant security.

4. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, because this is the best way to become extensively useful.

Every industrious man, in every lawful calling, is a useful man. Industry makes the useful farmer, the useful mechanic, the useful physician, and the useful magistrate. And one principal reason why men are so often useless is, that they neglect their own profession, and divide and shift their attention among a multiplicity of objects and pursuits. If ministers, then, indulge themselves in ease, idleness, or dissipation, they may expect to be barren and unfruitful in the vineyard of Christ. But if they give themselves wholly to the ministry, and lay themselves out to fulfil it, they may expect to become able divines, good casuists, and successful preachers. Activity and faithfulness in the service of God, is always accompanied with

that constant and ardent desire of success, which has a natural and moral tendency to obtain it. Those, therefore, who have pursued this course in the ministry, have commonly become eminently serviceable in the church of Christ. We have many examples to illustrate and confirm these observations. Paul was remarkable for his labors, and as remarkable for his eminent usefulness and success. Dr. Doddridge, Mr. Baxter, and Mr. Edwards, were great and useful divines. And these men, it is well known, were remarkably diligent, laborious, and faithful in the discharge of their office. If others, then, wish to be equally serviceable in promoting the cause of truth and the interests of religion, let them be equally diligent, laborious, and faithful, in their sacred calling.

5. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, because they actually engage to do it.

When they take the pastoral watch and care of a particular people, they publicly and solemnly devote themselves to their service. They engage to be the servants of their people, and to employ all their time and strength, all their powers and abilities, in promoting their spiritual benefit. Hence says the apostle, speaking in the name of ministers, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." And again he suggests the same idea to Timothy. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." A minister has no right to make the least reservation of his time, of his talents, of his heart or his hands, but is bound to devote his all to the ministry. If he is, therefore, either idle, or entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, he is guilty of violating his public and solemn engagements. We should all judge so in any other instance. If a hired servant neglects our business, and spends his time in his own, or in idleness, we charge him with a breach of fidelity. A minister then actually defrauds his people of their right, if he gives not himself wholly to their service. I speak not of cases of absolute necessity, which carry their own justification, and equally excuse the apostle Paul, and any other minister of the gospel, for working with his hands. But such cases excepted, every minister is bound by his own solemn vows, to devote himself wholly to the service of God and the good of his people. I must add,

6. That the *importance* of the ministry requires those who undertake it to give themselves wholly to their office.

The importance of any business is to be estimated according to the magnitude of the objects which are connected with

it or suspended upon it. The business of a physician is important, because the lives of men are virtually lodged in his hands. The business of an ambassador at a foreign court is important, because the interests of whole nations and kingdoms are suspended upon his conduct. So the business of a gospel minister is infinitely important, because the eternal interests of men are intrusted to his care. No other business of so much importance, either this side of eternity or beyond it, was ever committed to created beings. We know not that the endless happiness or misery of immortal creatures ever was, or ever will be suspended upon each other's conduct in the invisible world. But here, in the present state, we find that such infinitely important objects are lodged for a time in the hands of ministers. There is not, therefore, any work in the universe, which belongs to creatures to perform, so weighty and important as the work of the ministry. Men must live or die, be happy or miserable to all eternity, accordingly as ministers either fulfil or neglect the important trusts reposed in them.

And it is for this reason, that they are so solemnly warned, in the sacred oracles, to be diligent and faithful in their work. All the divine warnings and exhortations directed to them, plainly convey the idea, that both their own and their people's salvation is suspended upon their diligence, fidelity, and watchfulness. "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them," says the apostle to Timothy, and immediately adds, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." In the same strain God speaks to the prophet Ezekiel. "Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman; if, when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him; but he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that

wicked man shall die in his iniquity; *but his blood will I require at thine hand.* Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; *but thou hast delivered thy soul.*" These solemn warnings and admonitions lay ministers under an absolute necessity of being laborious and faithful in their work. For, if they prove negligent, careless and unfaithful, they and their people must lie down together in everlasting sorrow.

I have now finished what I have to say upon the nature and obligation of ministers' giving themselves wholly to their work, and proceed to improve the subject.

1. We learn from what has been said, that if ministers do give themselves wholly to their work, they will make it appear. This is a conclusion which the apostle draws from the subject. "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all;" or, as it might be rendered, "that thy profiting may appear in all;" that is, in all thy conduct, and in every branch of thy ministerial office. As it is more difficult for any man to conceal his knowledge, than his ignorance, so it is more difficult for a minister to conceal his faithfulness, than his unfaithfulness. If ministers give themselves wholly to their work, they will certainly profit by it, and increase in knowledge, piety and usefulness. They will become more and more wise to win souls, and more and more engaged to do it. The industrious man will thrive; for we are told the "hand of the diligent maketh rich." A faithful, studious, prayerful minister will make advances in knowledge and holiness. His public labors will breathe the spirit of his private studies and devotions. And his devout and exemplary life will give weight and energy to his public addresses.

But the means he employs will more fully discover his ultimate end. View a man's daily conduct, and you will easily perceive his leading object. If you see him rise early, and late take rest; if you see him shun idle company and vain amusements; if you see him apply every part of his property to the best advantage; you will be fully convinced that he gives himself wholly to his business, and determines to be rich. So, if you see a minister who rises early and late takes rest; who loves his study and appears to be at home in it; who avoids vain conversation, and delights in that which is good to the use of edifying; and who appears to partake of the joys as well as of the afflictions of the gospel; you will naturally conclude that he gives himself wholly to his work. Such a minister's profiting will appear to all, and carry convincing evidence to every mind that his work absorbs all his thoughts and attention, gov-

erns his views and pursuits, and affords him the highest pleasure and satisfaction in life.

2. We learn from what has been said, that if ministers do not give themselves wholly to their work, they will also make it appear. The means, as we have just observed, will discover the end. If a man is going to a certain place, he will naturally choose the road which will carry him thither. Or if he is seeking a certain end, he will naturally employ the means, which will put him in possession of his desired object. And it is by observing this inseparable connection between means and ends, that we are able, in ten thousand instances, to discover the different views, and of consequence, to distinguish the different characters of men. By this criterion, we discover the knave, the miser and the sluggard. And by the same criterion, you may discover the idle and unfaithful minister. If he gives not himself to the ministry, he will give the ministry to himself. And the ministry, it is well known, may be made a very pretty sinecure; that is, an office of ease, of wealth, and of honor, without employment. But if a man should serve himself of the ministry, and make it subservient to his own avaricious, worldly views, he would be very apt to make it appear, at home and abroad, in his own house, and in the house of God. For the means and the end are totally different, and will appear so to every discerning spectator. If a minister does not love to preach, if he does not love to study, if he does not love to promote the cause of Christ and the interests of religion, his general mode of conduct will serve to discover it. For, if he does not love these objects, he will certainly love and pursue others, to the neglect of the labors and duties of his proper business. His proper business he will pursue with coldness and indifference; his supreme object he will pursue with warmth and pleasure. In his proper business, he will appear out of his element; and out of his proper business, he will appear in his element. He will carry with him into all companies, into all places, and into all duties, visible marks of his leading object. For, he "cannot serve God and mammon;" and if he gathers not with Christ, he will scatter abroad.

3. We learn from what has been said, why the vineyard of Christ bears, at this day, such a disagreeable and melancholy appearance. If we go into a field which is all overgrown with thorns and nettles, and whose hedges, fences, and stone walls are broken down, we know by its appearance whose field it is, and pronounce, without hesitation, that it belongs to the slothful man, who says, "yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." So, if we go into the vineyard of Christ, and find where the hedges and stone walls are broken

down, and where briars and thorns are sprung up, we must naturally conclude that sluggards have been there. And do we not find many such neglected and uncultivated places in the vineyard of Christ? Is it not very much overgrown with thorns and nettles? Are not its walls and hedges very much broken down? But to drop these metaphors, are not the terms of communion and the modes of discipline, in many places, very different from those which Christ himself hath appointed? Are not those sacred ordinances frequently divided, which he hath absolutely united; and those peculiar privileges which he hath given to his friends, bestowed freely and without distinction upon his enemies? Are not gross and fatal errors indulged, if not nourished and fostered in the bosom of some of our churches? Are not open vices and immoralities suffered to spread and prevail in many of our congregations, without being restrained, and what is still more melancholy and shocking, without being condemned and reproved?

Such are the disagreeable and gloomy appearances of the vineyard of Christ at this day. And are not these the fruits, that we should naturally expect from sloth and negligence? If ministers were more watchful, more diligent, more laborious, and more heartily and unreservedly devoted to their work, we might certainly expect better fruits would appear in the garden of the Lord. For, wherever we find better ministers, we find better fruits. I appeal to facts. Go into those parts of the vineyard of Christ where ministers give themselves wholly to their work, and there you will find vice and immorality condemned and reproved, if not restrained; there you will find churches kept in repair; and there you will find a number of warm and lively christians growing in knowledge and in grace. We are obliged therefore to ascribe, in a great measure though not altogether, the present wretched and guilty state of our churches and congregations, to the negligence and unfaithfulness of ministers.

4. We learn from what has been said, the great criminality of those who sustain the sacred office, but do not give themselves wholly to their work. An idle person in the lowest station of life, who clothes himself and his family in rags, and reduces them to poverty and wretchedness, is very criminal, and carries about with him visible marks of his negligence and guilt. But how much more inexcusable and guilty are idle, negligent, unfaithful ministers, who render both themselves and their people, in the highest sense, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked! The barrenness of those churches which they ought to have cultivated and enriched, and the leanness of those souls which they ought to have fed with knowledge and

understanding, bear witness to their face, and charge them with aggravated guilt. But besides these fruits of their negligence, which are at once both the evidences and aggravations of their guilt; their own voluntary, public, and solemn vows and engagements must be brought into the account, to fill up the measure of their sins. The aggravations arising from both these sources will be fully displayed at the great and last day. Then the skirts of their garments shall be unfolded, and the blood of the souls of the poor innocents, who perished through their negligence, shall be brought to light; and at the same time, the solemn vows and engagements which they violated, shall be fully exhibited to their own view, and to the view of those whom they neglected, betrayed and destroyed. These aggravations of guilt will appear to be peculiar to those who have been negligent and unfaithful in the ministry; and will sink them lower than the lowest of all other classes of men, in the gulf of perdition. Let us all, therefore, my brethren, now judge and condemn ourselves, that we may not be judged and condemned of the Lord. And while we mourn for our past negligence and unfaithfulness, let us resolve to give ourselves wholly to our work in time to come, and to watch for souls as those who must give account.

Permit me now to turn my discourse to him, who is waiting to be introduced into this part of the vineyard of Christ.

Dear Sir,—You have reason to bow your knee in profound gratitude to the Father of mercies, who allows you to choose and enter upon the greatest and best work in the world. Gratitude therefore obliges you to give yourself wholly to the service of God. From this day of your public dedication, to the day of your decease, your time will be consecrated time, your talents consecrated talents, your interests consecrated interests. If you withhold or divert these from your sacred work, you will be guilty of sacrilege; but if you give them wholly to your office, you will make your profiting appear unto all. If then you wish to appear a faithful minister, be one. If you wish to be a successful minister, be a faithful one. And if you wish to go through your work with ease, and to finish it with joy, give yourself wholly to the duties of your office. You have but one object to pursue, and that is your work. Let that have the supreme place in your heart Let that have a governing influence upon your life. Let that bring every other object and concern into complete subordination. You need not be concerned about riches or honors; for these, so far as they can be either necessary or beneficial to you, shall fall to your lot, if you seek first the kingdom of God and the good of your people. When God requires you to give yourself wholly to your

work, he forbids you to take thought for the morrow. When he requires you to be wholly concerned about his honor and interest, he engages to take care of you and of all your concerns. But if you withhold your time, or your labors, or your heart, from this people, you may expect that God will deny you his gracious smiles and presence, and teach you the folly and guilt of unfaithfulness, by those briars and thorns which are the fruits of your own negligence. Be kind then to this people, speak good words to them, and devote yourself wholly to their service; and you will justly claim their sincere esteem, veneration and respect. Lay out yourself to be a minister, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. Enter into this vineyard of Christ, with a full determination to labor, and if possible, to repair the waste places. Manure and cultivate this garden of the Lord, and you may expect the dews of heaven to water it. Feed this flock of Christ with the sincere milk of the word, and you may expect that they will grow thereby. Display divine truth with a full blaze of evidence, and you may expect the mists of darkness and error will vanish. How this people shall appear, in this world, at the day of judgment, and to all eternity, depends, under God, upon your conduct. Their eternal interests in the most important stage of their existence, are now, for a while, to be lodged in your hands. It is therefore as important that you should be laborious and faithful in your work, as it is that you and they should be saved. Be entreated then, to "take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, and continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."

The Church and Congregation in this place, will please to indulge me in a short, but free address, on this solemn occasion.

Dearly Beloved,—If you have been humble in asking, you will be grateful in receiving, one of the richest blessings which Christ has to bestow upon a people, a pastor after his own heart. Such a pastor, we believe, is now waiting to take the care and charge of your souls. And if he should fulfil his great obligations to you, he will lay you under great obligations to him. If he should seek your future and highest good, he will oblige you to seek his present ease and comfort. If he should be laborious and faithful in his work, he will oblige you to assist, to encourage and to support him in it. If he should seek to promote the purity of the church, the destruction of error, and the salvation of sinners, he will oblige you to seek and pursue the same desirable and important objects. And if he should plainly and faithfully preach the pure doctrines of the gospel, he will oblige you to receive and embrace them in meekness and love. In a

word, if he should be a good minister, he will oblige you to be a good people.

But if he should fulfil his obligations to you, and you should violate your obligations to him, the consequence to you will be fatal. All his labors, all his self denial, all his love and compassion, will only aggravate your present guilt and future destruction. God is about to try you. And a most tremendous trial it will be, if he puts a price into your hands to get wisdom, and you have no heart to it, but prefer folly to wisdom, and darkness to light. This is a solemn day to you, and next to that day, when you must give an account how you have received and heard. Between this day and that, you will have a day of grace and space of repentance. And between this day and that, your pastor will have an opportunity of being a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, to your souls for ever. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!" Hear, and your souls shall live. Refuse, and your souls shall die!

SERMON VI.

GOD INCOMPREHENSIBLE BY HIS CREATURES.

DELIVERED OCTOBER 10, 1793, AT THE ORDINATION OF REV. CALVIN CHADDOCK, TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE THIRD CHURCH IN ROCHESTER.

CANST thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? — JOB, xi. 7.

THAT there is a first and supreme cause, who is the Creator and Governor of the universe, is a plain and obvious truth, which forces itself upon every attentive mind; so that many have argued the existence of God, from the unanimous consent of all nations to this great and fundamental truth. But though we may easily conceive of the existence of the Deity, yet his nature and perfections surpass the comprehension of all minds but his own. Our eyes can perceive, without difficulty, the scattered rays of the sun; but if we fix them steadily upon the sun itself, we are immediately involved in darkness by a profusion of light. So our general ideas of the Deity are clear and distinct; but if we take a more steady and particular survey of the divine mind, our mental sight is confused by the greatness and brightness of the object. We commonly, therefore, rest satisfied with more general and familiar views of the Supreme Being, unless some great event, some sudden change, or some pressing calamity, rouse our attention, and excite us to dive deeper into the divine nature and counsel. This was precisely the situation of Job. A great and sudden calamity had turned away his eyes from all second causes, and fixed his whole attention upon the supreme First Cause. He was astonished that God should raise him so high, and in a moment, sink him so low. This led him to pry into the mysteries of

divine providence, and to censure the ways of Him, whose ways are past finding out. Zophar, his friend, had impatiently heard his unreasonable complaints; and at length put a question to him, which was exactly suited to silence all his objections. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" This question carries in it the most strong and pointed assertion, that no created natures are able to comprehend the Supreme Being. The single point, therefore, which claims our present attention, is this:

That God is incomprehensible by his creatures.

This truth is too plain to need a labored proof. It rests upon the same evidence, upon which the truth of the divine existence depends. If God be eternal and self existent, he must be incomprehensible. Every mind revolts from the idea, that creatures should be able to comprehend their Creator, because this would imply that their powers and capacities are equal to his. I shall therefore only point out the various respects, in which God is incomprehensible by his creatures. And here I may observe,

1. That God is incomprehensible in respect to the ground of his existence.

Though God is the first of beings, and owes his existence to no cause out of himself, yet we are obliged to suppose there is some ground or reason of his existing, rather than not existing. We cannot conceive of any existence, which has no ground or foundation. But the foundation of God's existence is neither before, nor out of himself. For, if it were before himself, or out of himself, he could not be the first and self existent Being. The ground or reason, then, of God's existence must be wholly within himself. There must be something in the nature of the Divine Being which renders his existence absolutely necessary. But what that something is, which is wholly within himself, and which renders his existence absolutely necessary, is above the comprehension of all created beings. It is not the divine will; it is not the divine power; it is not the divine wisdom; it is not, indeed, any divine attribute, but something which lies at the foundation of all the perfections of God, and which can be comprehended only by himself.

2. God is incomprehensible in respect to many of his perfections.

In some sense, indeed, all the perfections of God are unsearchable; for they are all unbounded in respect to creatures. Most of the divine perfections, however, are in the strictest sense, incomprehensible; and these deserve particular notice.

Eternity is one. God is eternal. He is said to inhabit, that is, properly and supremely to possess, eternity. He never had

a beginning. There never was a time when he did not exist. Now we can easily conceive of a future, but not of a past eternity. We can easily conceive that God should continue to exist for ever and ever; for we can conceive the same of ourselves and other created beings. But an eternity *a parte ante*, as some divines call it, that is, a beginningless eternity, surpasses the comprehension of all created intelligences. They know that they had a beginning. They know that all created objects had a beginning. Of this they had a clear conception. But that a being should always exist without any beginning, is what they will never be able to fathom, either in this world, or that which is to come.

The omnipresence of God is another incomprehensible perfection. That God is present every where, both the light of nature and of divine revelation fully evince. As all creatures live, and move, and have their being in God, so it is certain to a demonstration, that his presence constantly fills all places throughout his vast dominions. But this immensity of the divine presence transcends the highest conceptions of created beings. They know with respect to themselves, that they move from place to place, that when they are in one place, they are not in another, and therefore that they cannot be in all places at once. But God is equally present with each of his creatures, and with all his creatures, at one and the same instant. This is incomprehensible on any supposition we can possibly make. If we suppose his presence is properly extended, this looks like a plain absurdity. For extension implies figure, and figure implies matter, which we cannot reconcile with our ideas of a pure and perfect spirit. Or, if we suppose the presence of the Supreme Spirit is not extended, and does not occupy space, yet this really surpasses our feeble conceptions. Though our spirits do not occupy space, yet their presence is limited; so that they are totally unable to perceive and operate equally at all places at once. Hence it is evident that the most exalted creature has nothing in his own circumscribed nature, which can give him an adequate view of the divine omnipresence.

The power of God is as incomprehensible as his presence. We know from the perfection of the divine nature, as well as from the declaration of scripture, that God can do every thing. His power can meet with no resistance or obstruction. Who can stay his hand? His power is incomprehensibly great, both in its nature and effects. The effects of divine power are astonishing. The present created system is very extensive; but were creatures able to comprehend this, yet we can easily conceive that almighty power is able to go on creating world after world, and system after system, within the bounds of unlimited

space, until the number and magnitude of created objects should rise above the conception of men and angels. So that we cannot comprehend even the effects which divine power is able to produce. But the nature of divine power is still more unsearchable. It is of such a nature as to give positive existence, or to produce something when there was nothing. Created beings have power only to move, alter, change, or new modify objects. They cannot create or produce existence, in a single instance. The production of a fly, or a worm, or the smallest insect, is as much above their power, as the creation of a world. Creative power, therefore, is utterly incomprehensible. Were it not a fact, we should be ready to say that the Almighty could not produce something out of nothing. And Dr. Cudworth, in his Intellectual System, tells us that this was the general opinion of the heathen philosophers. But the Bible gives us better information, and assures us that this and all other worlds are the production of omnipotent power. This, however, we cannot comprehend; for who can "find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Again,

No one can comprehend the knowledge of God. This is as high as heaven, and deeper than hell; the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. God knows the number of the stars, and can call them by their proper names. He knows the number of men, of angels, of all created objects. He knows all things that have been, that now are, that will be, or that might be. His knowledge takes in all objects within the compass of possibility. Such is the vast extent of divine knowledge; but the nature of it is still more unsearchable. For God knows all things by intuition, and of consequence knows many things which creatures never have known, and never will know. In particular, he intuitively knows how he exists, how he operates, and how all creatures live, and move, and have their being in him. Such knowledge is wonderful; it is high; we cannot attain to it.

I might now mention the moral perfections of God, whose extent and degree surpass our limited views. For the love of God, which involves all his moral attributes, has produced, and will produce such great and lasting effects, as none of his creatures will be able to comprehend to all eternity. But since the holiness of God and the holiness of the creature, the justice of God and the justice of the creature, the goodness of God and the goodness of the creature, the mercy of God and the mercy of the creature, are all of the same nature, and differ only in their extent and degree, I will not enlarge upon these divine excellences, but proceed to observe,

3. That God is incomprehensible in his great designs.

None of the creatures of God can look into his mind, and see all his views and intentions as they lie there. Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, and all his designs are profound secrets, until he is pleased to unfold them. And since he has not been pleased to disclose all his purposes either to men or angels, so none by searching can find out God. His counsels will of necessity remain incomprehensible, until his word or providence shall reveal them to his intelligent creatures. Men and angels, and even Christ himself, have been unacquainted with some of the divine counsels, and perhaps they never will fully comprehend them all. For though God will be perpetually revealing more and more of his secret purposes, yet we can no more conceive of their being all revealed, than we can conceive of eternal ages ceasing to roll. As God is incomprehensible in his designs, so in the next place,

4. He is incomprehensible in his works.

Their nature, number and magnitude stretch beyond the largest views of creatures. The best astronomer is unable to ascertain the number of the celestial bodies, or exactly measure their magnitudes, distances and revolutions. The best naturalist is unable to discover the various species and properties of all sensitive natures. The best philosopher is unable to comprehend the structure and mechanism of the human body, or even that of the smallest insect. And the best metaphysician is unable to investigate the structure and operation of the human mind, or trace the intimate connection between soul and body, and their powerful influence upon each other. No man knows how he sees, or how he hears, or how he tastes, or how he smells. No man knows how second causes produce their effects; nor how the material system holds together, and hangs upon nothing. The works of the Lord are great, and above the comprehension of all his creatures.

I observe once more,

5. That God is unsearchable in his providence.

We know that whatever God has done, he always intended to do; but we do not know at present all the reasons of his conduct, nor all the consequences which will flow from it. God has caused ten thousand changes to pass over kingdoms, and nations, and private individuals, the reasons and consequences of which will never be fully known before the great and last day. And respecting future events, God has drawn over them an impenetrable vail. We know not what even a day may bring forth. It is true, indeed, we know that our times, and the times of all other beings are in God's hands; but what those times shall be, neither we nor they can so much as conjecture. God's judgments are a great deep, and his ways are

past finding out. Clouds and darkness will rest upon his providence, until they are dissipated by the clear light of eternity. Who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?

Having briefly illustrated the general observation, that God is incomprehensible by his creatures, I proceed to improve and apply the subject.

1. It appears from what has been said, that in a very important sense God is truly infinite.

To be incomprehensible is the same as to be infinite. It is as proper, therefore, to say that God is infinitely great, as to say that he is incomprehensibly great; to say that he is infinitely good, as to say that he is incomprehensibly good. In the same respect in which God is incomprehensible, he is truly infinite. And we have shown that he is incomprehensible in respect to his creatures, and therefore he is truly infinite in respect to them. But though God be incomprehensible in respect to his creatures, yet he is not incomprehensible in respect to himself; and therefore, notwithstanding he is infinite in respect to his creatures, yet he is not infinite in respect to himself. Who will say that God's present knowledge of himself is imperfect? Or who can imagine that God will eternally increase in the knowledge of himself, and so never attain a complete comprehension of his own nature and perfections? But if this be not true, then what right have we to say that God is absolutely infinite, that is, infinite with respect to himself? Is it not a plain contradiction of terms, to apply absolute infinity to a material object? And why is it not as plain a contradiction in terms, to apply absolute infinity to an immaterial one? If we cannot say, without contradicting ourselves, that a line is infinitely long, or that a globe is infinitely great; how can we say, without contradicting ourselves, that a faculty is infinitely great, or that a quality is infinitely good? If the doctrine of absolute infinity will prove any thing, it will prove the grossest absurdities, in respect both to matter and mind. By this, however, I would not be understood to mean that it is improper for ministers or others to ascribe infinity to God in their religious devotions; but only suggest that we might, by observing the distinction between comparative and absolute infinity, prevent much obscurity, at least in our reasonings about the great and incomprehensible Jehovah.

2. It appears from what has been said, that the incomprehensible nature of the Supreme Being does by no means preclude our having clear and just conceptions of his true character.

His incomprehensibility is the same as his greatness. But

does the greatness of any object prevent our having clear and just ideas of it? Because a mountain is larger than a small hill, can we not have as clear and just ideas of a mountain as of a small hill? Though our sight takes in the whole of a small hill, and not the whole of a mountain, yet what we do see of a mountain, we see as clearly as what we see of a small hill. Our ideas of material objects are not in the least obscured by their greatness. And this holds equally true in regard to mental or immaterial objects. Can we not as clearly perceive reason in a man as in a child, in a philosopher as in a peasant, in a Newton or a Bacon as in those of much meaner capacities? Why then should we not as clearly perceive power, wisdom, goodness, justice, or any other natural and moral excellence, in the Fountain as in the streams; in God as in the creature? Where there is the most power, the most wisdom and the most goodness, there these excellences are the most easily and clearly seen. And since God possesses these in the highest degree, therefore they are to be seen in him in the clearest and fullest manner. We find much more difficulty in perceiving small, than great objects. The nature, however, of no object depends upon its greatness, or smallness. Hence we are not to suppose that the nature of the Supreme Being differs from the nature of other intelligent beings, merely because he is incomprehensibly great. Is incomprehensible greatness, smallness? Is incomprehensible perfection, imperfection? Is incomprehensible love, hatred? Is incomprehensible wisdom, folly? Is incomprehensible knowledge, ignorance? How then can the incomprehensibility of divine perfections, obscure our ideas of them? They are not the less, but the more plain and intelligible, for being incomprehensibly great.

This, however, is denied by many. Infidel writers have laid hold of the doctrine of the divine incomprehensibility, in order to throw a veil of obscurity over the divine character, and thereby destroy the first principles of natural as well as revealed religion. Hume, in his dialogues on natural religion, has exerted his "all unhinging subtilty," to confound our ideas of the natural and moral perfections of the Deity. And the sole ground upon which he argues, is the incomprehensible nature of the divine attributes. By abusing this term, he insinuates that there must be an obscurity and uncertainty in all our ideas and reasonings respecting the great, incomprehensible First Cause. He insists that we cannot possibly learn his true character from his works, simply because his nature is incomprehensible. And did incomprehensible mean the same as obscure or unintelligible, it would be difficult indeed to avoid this conclusion. But since the term has a different meaning, every

argument drawn from it against our having clear and just conceptions of the Deity, is totally fallacious and inconclusive. We might naturally expect that infidels would wish to make one attribute of God injure another; and endeavor to construe his incomprehensibility into obscurity; but could we expect this from Christian divines? This, however, Christian divines have done. Dr. Brown in particular, supposes that God is incomprehensible, and from thence concludes that there is no analogy between him and other moral agents. Accordingly, upon this ground, he denies that we can frame any just and clear ideas of the divine power, holiness, justice, or any other divine perfection. But if this be true, it is easy to see that we have no medium, by which we can make it appear that God's character is amiable, his laws just, and his conduct right. And if we cannot make this appear, where is our obligation to love his character, obey his laws, and submit to his government; or, in other words, where is our obligation to religion? It is dangerous, in a high degree, to employ the divine incomprehensibility to obscure the divine character, and those essential truths which flow from it.

3. If God be incomprehensible by his creatures, we have no reason to deny our need of a divine revelation.

This is denied by those who deny the divine authority of the scriptures. They allege that reasonable creatures have no need of any other guide in religion and morality, than the plain, unadulterated light of nature. They suppose, the works and providence of God afford such discoveries of his character and will, as render a supernatural revelation totally needless. They have, therefore, attempted to lick into form a system of religion, which they would insinuate is dictated by the bare light of nature.

But is God incomprehensible? Can none of his creatures penetrate his mind, and discover his views and intentions? Is this true? And is this acknowledged to be true, by those who deny the divinity of the Bible? How, then, upon their own principles, can they deny the necessity of a divine revelation? If God made all things, he made all things for himself. And what ends he proposed in the creation of men and angels, they would never have discovered unless he had been pleased to inform them by an immediate revelation. Could Adam, in his state of innocence, have known either his duty or his destination, without a revelation of his Maker's will and designs? Would he have had a right to use the fruits of the earth, the beasts of the field, or any of the common bounties of Providence, without an express donation from the great Proprietor of all? If man, therefore, in his first and best estate, stood

in need of a supernatural revelation from his Creator, how much more do we, his guilty offspring, stand in need of some better discoveries of the will and gracious designs of our injured Sovereign, than we can possibly learn from his works and providence? The light of nature discovers no atonement for sin, and of consequence, no pardon for sinners. Socrates, and other sober heathens, saw their need of a divine revelation; and this every person must see, who impartially attends to the character of God, and to the character and state of man. As creatures, and especially as creatures involved in depravity, ignorance and guilt, we stand in perishing need of a revelation from heaven. To deny this revelation, therefore, as being needless, instead of discovering superior wisdom and penetration, betrays the grossest ignorance of God and of human nature.

4. If God is incomprehensible in his nature and perfections, then it is no objection against the divinity of the Bible that it contains some incomprehensible mysteries.

If God reveals himself, he must reveal himself as he is. His revelation, therefore, will naturally bear internal marks of his character, and contain some things mysterious and incomprehensible. The Bible contains no mysteries but such as respect the mode of the divine existence, and the mode of the divine operation. And these mysteries, it ought to be remembered, are only revealed and not explained. It is one thing to reveal a mystery, and quite another to explain it. To say that mysteries are revealed implies no absurdity; though to say that mysteries are explained implies a plain contradiction. But this contradiction cannot be fastened upon the Bible, which only reveals mysteries, and such mysteries, too, as are very necessary and useful. For it highly concerns us to know that God both exists and operates in a mysterious manner, though the knowledge of this will never enable us to comprehend the mysteries themselves. Hence the mysteries contained in the Bible, instead of weakening, serve to establish the credibility of its divine original.

5. If God be incomprehensible, then it is very unreasonable to disbelieve any thing, which he has been pleased to reveal concerning himself, merely because we cannot comprehend it.

Though we cannot comprehend God, yet God may comprehend himself; and, of consequence, may know many things concerning himself which we could never have known, unless he had been pleased to reveal them. We are obliged, therefore, to believe those things which God has revealed, though we are not able to comprehend them.

I beg leave here to adduce instances, in a few particulars,

which some have denied, simply because they deemed them to be incomprehensible.

God has clearly revealed the mode of his own existence. The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the plainest doctrines in the Bible. It is expressly asserted, "There are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." It is interwoven with one of the Christian sacraments, I mean the sacrament of baptism. We are required to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And it lies at the foundation of the gospel, and runs through the whole economy of redemption. This plain and important doctrine has been denied by many, because they could not comprehend it. But let me ask, can this be a good reason for disbelieving what God has plainly revealed? Why should they not disbelieve the existence of the Deity, because they cannot comprehend the ground of his existence? This they can no more explain than the doctrine of the Trinity. For it is just as easy to conceive that there should be a ground or reason of God's existing in three persons, as of his existing at all. Nay, it is as easy to conceive that God exists a Trinity in Unity, as to conceive that he made all things out of nothing. But it is said the doctrine of the Trinity implies a contradiction. I answer, it no more implies a contradiction than the doctrine of a true and proper creation. Both are mysteries, and both equally incomprehensible. But if we only admit that God is incomprehensible, then we may safely believe that God may be and do what is absolutely above our comprehension. If he has told us that he made all things by the word of his power, we may believe it because he has said it. And if he has told us that he can say, I, Thou, and He, and mean only himself, we may believe it because he has said it. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater."

Again: God has told us that his Son, the second person in the ever blessed Trinity, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." This God has told us, and this we may believe; though we cannot comprehend how the divine and human natures could be personally united.

Again: God has told us that he has formed all his purposes from eternity; and this plain truth we are obliged to believe upon the divine testimony, though we know not what his purposes are. There is no mystery at all in God's forming pur-

poses. It is as easy to conceive that God should form his own purposes as that any other moral agent should form his. It is as easy to conceive that God should form all his purposes from eternity, as that he should form them in time. And it is as easy to conceive that God should reveal this truth as any other in the Bible. Where, then, is the mystery of the divine decrees? And where is the propriety of calling this, rather than any other divine truth in question?

Again: The inspired writers tell us that the scheme which God formed from eternity is absolutely perfect. Solomon says, "I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it." The divine plan cannot be enlarged, diminished, nor, in the least respect, altered for the better; it is absolutely the best possible. Now since God has clearly revealed this truth it is not presumption to believe it, but presumption to deny it. Though we may imagine there are ten thousand defects and imperfections in the divine scheme, yet we ought to believe what we are expressly told: "God is the rock; his work is perfect." The incomprehensible nature of the divine perfections are no objection against the perfection of the divine plan, but an argument in favor of it. Nothing can clear up the divine conduct but this great truth, that "whatever is, is right."

6. This subject shows us that ministers ought to make it their great object, in preaching, to unfold the character and perfections of the Deity.

This is the object which lies nearest to the heart of God, and which he uniformly and constantly pursues in all his conduct. He made the heavens and the earth, that they might discover his nature and declare his glory. He governs all events, in the course of his providence, to make the inhabitants of the world to know that he is God. In a word, he concerted the astonishing scheme of our redemption, through the sufferings and death of his Son, that the perfections of his nature might be unfolded before all the intelligent creation. This the apostle Paul tells us with the most grateful emotions: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." It was the original purpose of God, that the work of creation should be subservient to the work of redemption; and

that the work of redemption should finally issue in the fullest display of his glorious perfections.

Now this is the ultimate design of the gospel, and therefore this should be the ultimate design of ministers in preaching the gospel. The more they exhibit of the divine character and counsels in their public discourses, the more do they fall in with the designs of God, and the more do they answer the end of their appointment. We might naturally conclude from Paul's epistle to the Romans, as well as from his frequent appeals to his hearers, that he dwelt much upon the character of God in his preaching; but we have a more striking evidence of this from the discourse which he delivered at Athens, before a most learned and most venerable audience. "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. For in him we live, and move, and have our being." This discourse upon the omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, foreknowledge, predetermination, universal benevolence and agency of God, Paul delivered, not to aged, full grown Christians, not even to babes in Christ, but to those who were totally ignorant of the first principles of the oracles of God. He could think of nothing more proper to exhibit before ignorant, perishing Pagans, than the true character and incomprehensible perfections of the Deity. And he tells us that he meant to be a profitable preacher, and never kept back any thing which he thought would be profitable to his hearers. According to the opinion and practice of Paul, therefore, the most instructive, practical, and profitable preaching, is that which most clearly and fully displays the divine character. And it is easy to perceive that this must of necessity be the case; for there is not one valuable and important end to be answered by preaching, but what the exhibition of God's character is directly suited to answer.

All religious errors and delusions originate from some false notions of God; and therefore a clear exhibition of the divine

character will destroy the hopes of those who are placing their expectations of divine favor upon any false and sandy foundation. Let it be made to appear that God is the supreme disposer of the hearts, as well as the actions of men, and where is the first principle of Arminianism? Let it be made to appear that God is supremely amiable and excellent, and worthy to be loved for what he is in himself, and where is the first principle of Antinomianism? Or let it be made to appear that God is incomprehensibly wise and good, and that he may have sufficient reasons in his own mind, for saving a part, and not the whole of mankind, and where is the first principle of Universalism? Let the divine character be properly exhibited, and the nature, necessity and sufficiency of the atonement of Christ will appear, and the whole gospel scheme be unfolded. Let the divine character be properly exhibited, and the human heart will be disclosed; for the bare view of the divine character, is instead of all other arguments to convince sinners that their hearts are enmity against God. Let the divine character be opened, and the best motives to repentance will be exhibited. Though Job justified himself before men, yet when God by a series of solemn interrogations, gave him a clear view of his great and amiable character, he was melted into contrition and self abasement. "I have heard of thee, by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Let the divine character be exhibited, and saints will be edified. For the divine character has a transforming influence upon the hearts of christians, and a powerful tendency to assimilate them to the divine likeness. "We all," says the apostle, speaking in the name of christians, "We all, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

All obligations to religious duties originate from the excellency and perfection of the divine Being, and therefore the clear exhibition of his character is best suited to lead men to the practice of religion. Hence the apostle exhibits this motive to induce christians to make an unreserved dedication of themselves to the service of God. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

In a word, if ministers wish to set every creature and every object in its truest, noblest and most important light; if they wish to form their people for the service and enjoyment of God in this world, and that which is to come; let them make it their main object in all their preaching, to unfold, in the clearest

manner possible, the character and perfections of the incomprehensibly glorious and blessed God.

This leads me to apply my discourse to him, who is now to be set apart to the sacred work of the gospel ministry in this place.

Dear Sir,—You are this day to commence *a steward of the mysteries of God.* These you are to dispense, and not to conceal. For, you very well know that it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. And faithfulness in a steward of the mysteries of God, principally consists in unlocking, unfolding, and, in the clearest manner, displaying the whole character and whole counsel of God. This is the point in which all faithful ministers are united, and in which they stand eminently distinguished from all unfaithful teachers. Among those who have been allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, some have been faithful and some unfaithful in every age of the Christian church. Some have appeared on the Lord's side and some on man's side. Some have justified the ways of God, and condemned the ways of men; and some have condemned the ways of God, and justified the ways of men. Faithful ministers have spoken for God, but unfaithful ministers have spoken against him. How many thousand volumes have been written, and how many thousand sermons have been preached against the character, the perfections and designs of the incomprehensibly great and glorious God! The mouths of this ungodly world have been always pouring forth their hard speeches against their Creator, Lawgiver and Judge. Ten thousand times more has been said against God, in our rebellious world, than against any other being in the universe. If your heart glows with love to the greatest and best of beings, how will you delight to wipe off the aspersions which have been cast upon the bright and spotless character of the Deity! Unto you is this grace given, that you should preach the unsearchable riches of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. Prudence prompted by gratitude will therefore never lead you to inquire how you may, in the easiest manner, conceal any part of the divine character or divine will; but, on the other hand, how you may in the clearest and happiest manner possible, declare the whole counsel of God. The same moment in which the gospel shall be committed to your trust, the souls of men will be committed to your trust. And you cannot fulfil one of these trusts without fulfilling the other, nor betray one of these trusts without betraying the other. Be entreated, then, to be faithful, and feed your people with the good knowledge of God. The God whom you will serve in the gospel of his Son is the ever present, the all seeing and heart

searching God; therefore so speak, not as pleasing men, but God which trieth your heart. Approve yourself to God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to every one a portion in due season. In a word, be thou faithful unto death, and God himself, whom you serve, shall be your shield and exceeding great reward.

I now turn my discourse to the church and people in this place.

Men and Brethren,—God, in his unsearchable providence, has been pleased to leave you long as a flock without a shepherd. You have been called to pass through many trying scenes, and to surmount great obstacles in the way of the resettlement of a gospel minister. But now a brighter prospect is opening before you, and you are called to rejoice, but to rejoice with trembling. For this man, upon whom your hearts and hopes are fixed, may be set up, like his divine Master, for the fall as well as rising of many in this place. If he proves faithful, as we hope he will, the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed, and the real characters of all will be tried. Are you prepared for the trial? Do you wish to know whether you are friends or foes to that God, whose favor is life, and whose frowns are worse than death? This you must know, this you will know, sooner or later. For God has determined that the inhabitants of heaven, of earth, and of all worlds, shall know how they feel towards his great and amiable character.

Be pleased, then, to open your minds to those divine mysteries which your pastor, in faithfulness to God and in friendship to you, shall clearly exhibit, from time to time, for your instruction and godly edifying. Receive the truth in love, and the truth will make you free; and if the truth make you free, you will be free indeed. If you love God, God will love you, and come and make his abode with you. For he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Let me entreat each individual, therefore, to accept the advice and consolation which Eliphaz offered to Job: "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up;—yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence.—Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee,—and the light shall shine upon thy ways."

To conclude: Let us all remember this, that we must see God. God has laid a foundation to exhibit his whole character before the minds of intelligent beings. And can we suppose that he is not able to carry into execution his great design? He has already made some of his creatures see the glory, and

feel the weight of his character. In the other world, the eyes of all his creatures are always open, and their minds always awake. They rest not day nor night from seeing and feeling the presence and perfections of the Deity. This is the only ignorant and stupid part of the creation of God. And we shall not long remain in our present unfeeling, torpid state. Our eyes will soon be opened, never to be closed. Our minds will be awakened, never to sleep again. The present objects which now obscure our sight of God, and divert our attention from him, will soon be removed, and a flood of light will break in upon our astonished minds. Then it will be as impossible not to see God, as not to exist; and as impossible not to feel the weight of his character, as not to see it. But who, that are enemies to God, can see him and live? For our God is a consuming fire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Now is the only time for sinners to become reconciled to God, and secure his favor. Therefore, "as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Amen.

SERMON VII.

A WISE PREACHER AIMS TO MOVE HIS HEARERS.

AN ORDINATION SERMON.

THE words of the wise are as goads? — ECCL. xii. 11.

SOLOMON was a man of superior wisdom, which he displayed in the beginning of his reign, as a prince; and in the close of his reign, as a preacher. Having passed through a great variety of scenes, and collected a large stock of useful knowledge, he was eminently qualified to preach upon the vanity of the world, and the importance of religion, with peculiar pungency. This distinguishing quality, which discovers the strength and clearness of his mind, and characterizes all his writings, justly entitles him to the highest rank among the sacred teachers. Accordingly, Ezra, or some other inspired writer, tells us that he not only "taught the people knowledge," but taught them with so much force and pungency that his words were "as goads, or nails fastened" by those prophets, or "masters of assemblies," who received their sentiments and language from the immediate inspiration of the chief "Shepherd and Bishop of souls." Though none who are destitute of the wisdom of Solomon can expect to reach his supreme excellence in preaching, yet every wise minister will imitate his noble example, and endeavor to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers. And to illustrate this general observation, I shall show,

I. That every wise preacher will aim to impress the minds of his hearers; and,

II. How he will preach, in order to attain this desirable object.

I. I am to show that a wise preacher will aim to impress the minds of his hearers.

By a wise preacher, we mean one who resembles the royal preacher, in some of his most amiable and distinguishing qualities. Solomon was a man of genius, of learning, and of piety. He understood the nature and tendency of all sensible objects. He was thoroughly acquainted with human nature. He knew the feelings of all men, under all circumstances and conditions of life. He knew the various springs of human action, and the various avenues to the human heart. In a word, he knew every thing necessary to penetrate and impress the minds of both saints and sinners. These excellent ministerial qualifications, which adorned and distinguished the royal preacher, in some measure adorn and distinguish all who are wise to win souls. They have the same kinds of knowledge, though not in the same degree. Hence we may presume that all wise preachers will aim to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers. But this will more fully appear, if we consider,

1. Every wise preacher knows that unless he impresses the minds of his hearers, he can do them no good by his preaching. Hearers must feel what they hear, or what they hear will be like sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. That discourse which fails of penetrating the mind, immediately vanishes, without producing any desirable or permanent effect. It is like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up. The principal design of the preacher is lost upon the hearer, unless he makes the hearer feel the truth and weight of what he delivers. The wise preacher, therefore, always means to penetrate the minds of those to whom he speaks. He no farther regards their eyes, or their ears, than only, by these avenues, to convey the truth to their minds, where he means to make the deepest impression, and produce the greatest effect.

2. Every wise preacher knows that his hearers will not feel the truth and importance of what he says, unless he makes them feel it. Hearers look upon it as the part of the preacher to make them feel. They mean to be passive in hearing, unless he makes them active. If he appears indifferent about their feeling, they think they may be equally indifferent about it. They never mean to invite him to speak, but intend that he shall invite them to hear. They never mean to warm his mind, but expect that he should warm theirs. This natural dulness and deadness of hearers, the wise preacher knows he must encounter and overcome, in his preaching. And, therefore, he is sensible that he must move, before they will move; that he must feel, before they will feel; that he must seek his end, before he can possibly attain it. Accordingly, he always endeavors, if possible, to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers. This leads me to show,

II. How he will preach, in order to attain this desirable object.

When any person proposes a certain end, the end which he proposes, naturally suggests the proper means to accomplish it. This holds with respect to a wise preacher, who makes it his object to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers. For,

1. This end will naturally lead him to use the most proper style in preaching. He will choose the best words, and place them in the best order, to enlighten the mind and affect the heart. When any person means to impress the mind of another, his design always dictates a natural style, which is the most intelligible and the most forcible. The general, who means to be heard and regarded, speaks the language of authority. And the beggar, who means to be heard and pitied, speaks the language of distress. They both speak in the words in which their thoughts and feelings are conceived, and therefore they both speak the spontaneous language of nature, which all understand and most sensibly feel.

The preacher, like every other person, always thinks in words; and the words, in which he thinks upon his subjects, are the words to be used in his discourses. Could our thoughts drop from our pens, or from our lips, in the very words in which they first rise in our minds, we should write and speak in the most easy, natural and forcible manner. We often lose the energy of our thoughts and feelings, by trying to express them in the language of art, instead of the language of nature. Why do we find it so difficult to describe our past feelings, in the view of a great, or terrible, or sublime object? The principal reason is, we have lost our feelings, and, of consequence, the proper language to describe them. The prophets and apostles teach us the force of unpremeditated expressions. They took no thought what they should say or write, but received both their ideas and words from divine inspiration. Accordingly, we find no language so easy, so natural, so sublime, or so forcible as theirs. Their words are as goads, quick and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword. When any person speaks as he thinks and feels, he speaks the language of nature, which is always understood and always felt. A bare exclamation will often convey more determinate ideas, and make a deeper impression, than the most neat and well turned period. The wise preacher, therefore, who means to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers, will use a natural, plain, penetrating language, which all can understand, and which all must feel.

2. His design to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers, will lead him to exhibit great and interesting truths. All truths, whether agreeable or disagreeable, affect and impress

the mind, in proportion to their magnitude. The wise preacher, therefore, will always exhibit those truths which are either great in themselves, or great in their connection. The association of ideas is extremely intimate, and extremely forcible. The most trivial object may be placed in such a connection, and set in such a light, as to appear and feel very weighty and important. The flying of a sparrow, or the falling of a hair, considered as the object of the divine attention and government, becomes greatly interesting. The inspired writers mention some of the smallest and meanest objects in nature. They speak of worms, and flies, and frogs, and serpents; but they speak of them as the servants of God, and ministers of his vengeance, which gives them réal magnitude and importance. All the writings of Solomon abound with observations on common and familiar objects, which are placed in a striking and interesting light. He represents all the scenes, concerns and objects of time, in such a near and inseparable connection with death, judgment, and eternity, that they all appear unspeakably interesting to the highest as well as to the lowest of mankind. This is the method which every wise preacher will employ, to impress the minds of his hearers. He will exhibit such truths, as, either by their own weight, or by their natural connection, will find the nearest way to the human heart. He will bring much of the character, perfections, and designs of God, into his public discourses. He will preach Christ in the greatness of his nature, and in the glory and grace of his mediatorial character and works. He will exhibit man in the dignity of his nature, and in the importance of his destination. And he will unfold the scenes of a general judgment, and of a boundless eternity, in their own native awful solemnity. Now the truth respecting every being, and every creature, and every object, in such a serious connection, is infinitely important. The wise preacher, therefore, who has an instinctive discernment of the nature and connection of all divine truths, whether great or small, will always preach something which is weighty and interesting, and which will naturally lead to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers.

3. For the same purpose, he will explain divine truths, and describe divine objects. A minister may preach about divine truths, and about divine objects, without explaining the former, or describing the latter. But preaching about any truth, or any object, is cold and uninteresting. It may, perhaps, gratify the ear, or please the imagination; but it will never enlighten the understanding, awaken the conscience, or raise the affections. To make objects affecting, they must be described; and to make divine truths interesting, they must be explained. The

wise preacher, therefore, will not barely preach about the perfections, about the commands, about the purposes, or about the agency of God; but he will explain these truths, and endeavor to make his hearers understand and feel them, in their nature, connection, and importance. He will not barely preach about heaven, and about hell; but he will describe the state of the blessed, and the state of the damned, in the most clear and striking contrast. He will not barely preach about saints, and about sinners; but he will describe the character of the saint, and the character of the sinner, and trace these two opposite characters in all their various appearances and attitudes. He will describe the feelings of the saint, in light and darkness, in hope and fear, in joy and sorrow, in a growing and in a declining state. And, with equal plainness, he will describe the feelings of the sinner, in prosperity and adversity, under awakenings and convictions, and in the very act of turning to God, and embracing the gospel. He will tell every hearer how he has felt, and how he still feels. He will enter into every bosom, and search the most secret corners of every heart. And this will make his words as goads, or nails, which fasten and clinch upon every mind. The hearer always feels, when the preacher hits him; and he always hits him, when he describes his character. Elijah often described Ahab, and Ahab felt the description; and therefore he said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" The Jews felt the preaching of Christ, which described their characters, and pierced them to the heart. There is always a peculiar pungency in that preaching which explains divine truths, describes divine objects, and distinguishes human characters.

4. The wise preacher, who intends to impress the minds of his hearers, will arrange divine truths, and exhibit divine objects, in such an order, as to reach every power and faculty of the soul, in its proper turn. The understanding is the inlet to the other powers of the mind. No objects or truths can impress the mind, unless they are first perceived by the understanding. The wise preacher, therefore, will address the understanding before the conscience, and the conscience before the heart. This is the order of nature, and this order must be observed, to make the deepest impression on the human mind. When the understanding is informed, and the conscience awakened, then the affections may be raised as high as possible. There is no danger of raising the affections too high, by the exhibition of truth, though there is nothing else that can raise them higher. The simple truth respecting God, and Christ, and heaven, and hell, will raise the love, and gratitude, and joy of saints to the highest pitch. And the same simple truth, respecting the same

great and glorious objects, will raise the enmity, and fear, and distress of sinners to the highest degree. Instruction should always go before declamation. It can answer no valuable purpose, to inflame the passions before light is thrown into the understanding and conscience; but rather serves, on the other hand, to produce the most fatal effects. Many souls, no doubt, have been destroyed by this mode of preaching. To raise the fears, and then the hopes of sinners, without exhibiting a proper portion of divine truth, only serves to make them build upon the sand, and to fill them with a momentary joy, which must end in everlasting sorrow. The wise preacher, therefore, will instruct in order to affect, and enlighten in order to inflame.

5. The wise preacher, who means to impress the minds of his hearers, will always apply his discourse according to their particular characters. What belongs to saints, he will apply to saints; and what belongs to sinners, he will apply to sinners. He will not leave it to his hearers to apply his discourses, but he will apply them himself, and in such a manner too, that each individual shall receive a proper portion of divine truth. He will not only make the general distinction between saints and sinners, but the particular distinction between the various individuals of each of these two classes of men. There are both saints and sinners, of various characters and conditions. There is nothing will affect a saint, like a particular application of divine truth to his own particular case. All truths will not equally apply to all saints. Some truths more properly apply to the negligent saint; some to the backsliding saint; some to the mourning saint; and some to the growing and rejoicing saint. And in order to impress the minds of saints, of such various characters and conditions, the preacher must apply divine truths according to their various and particular cases. On the other hand, in order to impress the minds of sinners, a particular application of divine truths to their particular characters, is equally necessary. Some truths must be applied to profane sinners; some to skeptical sinners; some to moral sinners; some to self righteous sinners; and some to awakened and convinced sinners.

The Bible abounds with particular applications to particular characters; and it is this which renders it so penetrating and convincing to every class of readers. Almost every promise and threatening is directed to a correspondent character. The saint is described, who is comforted; and the sinner is described, who is condemned. No saint can apply any scripture promise to himself, without finding in himself the scripture character, to which the promise is made. Who can apply the promises in the fifth of Matthew to himself, without knowing his own

particular character? None but the pure in heart, can apply the promise to such. None but those who mourn, can apply the promise to such. None but the meek, can apply the promise to such. None but those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, can apply the promise to such. None but the merciful, can apply the promise to such. And none but peace makers, can apply the promise to such. When these, or any other promises in the Bible, are applied to their correspondent characters, saints will feel their force, and derive light and comfort from them. But when they are misapplied, they comfort those who ought to be made sad, and make sad those who ought to be comforted. So, on the other hand, a sinner will feel the force of no threatening, unless it corresponds to his own particular character. The threatening to the hypocrite comforts rather than convinces the profligate sinner; and the threatening to the profligate sinner comforts rather than convinces the moral and self righteous sinner. In short, no sinner will feel the force of the preacher, until he applies that particular truth to him, which corresponds to his particular character. But when any truth is applied to any sinner, which corresponds to his particular character, he will keenly feel its irresistible energy. When the preacher describes and condemns his particular course of sinning, or describes and destroys his particular ground of confidence, he will feel his words to be goads, and nails, and spears to his soul. No sinner can help feeling those truths which condemn his character, and destroy his hopes. Whatever truth fastens guilt upon the sinner, destroys his hopes; and whatever destroys his hopes, destroys his foundation; and when his foundation is destroyed, he must fall. Felix trembled when Paul applied the truth to his particular character. Paul himself lost all his hopes, by a particular application of a particular precept. The promising young man was filled with grief and despair, by the particular injunction of a particular duty. And three thousand souls on the day of Pentecost, were struck under deep conviction, by the particular application of divine truth to their particular characters. The wise preacher, therefore, who means to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers, will be very particular in the application of his discourses. He will handle the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, with skill and dexterity, and strike every hearer in the most tender and vulnerable part. This is the most difficult, but yet the most important point in preaching. Whoever attains this art, will be a powerful and pungent preacher. His words will be like goads and nails, which will wound, if they do not heal, and which will destroy, if they do not save, every hearer.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We learn from what has been said, the importance of ministers' being good men. Piety is necessary, both to dispose and enable them to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers. Men of piety know more about the human heart than others. They know the views, and desires, and hopes, and refuges of sinners, under all circumstances. This enables them to direct the sword of the Spirit to their most tender and defenceless parts. They know how to strike at the foundation of their false hopes. They know their haunting places, and are able, by the proper exercise of spiritual weapons, to destroy their strong holds, bring down their high thoughts, and lay them defenceless before God and their own consciences. And with respect to saints, they have a fellow feeling with them, and know how to comfort, quicken, animate and direct them through all their outward and inward conflicts and enjoyments. This experimental acquaintance with the human heart is the best qualification for a plain, searching, pungent preacher. And it is this only, which will dispose a man to preach plainly and faithfully. Many preachers, we have reason to fear, daub with untempered mortar; and prophesy smooth things, because they are afraid of offending their people, by a plain and pungent application of divine truth to their hearts and consciences. But supreme love to God, and a tender concern for the good of souls, takes away this fear of man, and emboldens a minister to exhibit and apply divine truths in the most plain and pungent manner.

2. We learn from what has been said, the importance of ministers' giving themselves wholly to their work. If they mean to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers, they must exhibit, in the course of their preaching, a rich variety of divine truths. But they will soon lose a variety, and fall into a sameness in preaching, unless they constantly improve their minds in the knowledge of the doctrines and duties of religion, by reading, meditation and prayer. They must teach themselves, if they would teach their people. They must grow in knowledge, if they would feed their people with knowledge and understanding. They must warm their own hearts with divine truth, if they would warm the hearts of their hearers. They must converse much with invisible and divine objects, if they would impress the minds of their hearers with a clear and realizing sense of eternal realities. A preacher always carries his habitual views and feelings into the pulpit. If he neglects his proper business, and pursues the common concerns of life,

he will lose that holy fire and pathos, which is absolutely necessary to penetrate and impress the minds of men.

3. We learn from what has been said, the manner in which a minister should appear and speak in the pulpit. His voice, his looks, his gestures, and his whole deportment, should be wholly governed by his ultimate end, which is to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers. This is an infallible guide. For while he means to penetrate and impress the minds of his audience, he will necessarily avoid every unnatural tone, unmeaning expression, and insignificant action. While he means to be natural, he will be natural. While he means to be significant, he will be significant. While he means to impress, he will impress. While he aims at the understanding, he will penetrate the understanding. While he aims at the conscience, he will penetrate the conscience. While he aims at the heart, he will penetrate the heart. The preacher always discovers his ultimate aim to every discerning hearer. His tone, his air, his attitude is always correspondent to the impression which he means to make. If he means to attract the eyes of the congregation, his deportment will proclaim it. If he means to please the imagination, and gain the esteem and applause of his hearers, his voice, his countenance, his language, and all his attitudes will discover it. Or if he means to promote the instruction, conviction and edification of his people, he will practically tell them so, by the manner, as well as matter, of his preaching.

4. We learn from what has been said, that it is not very material, whether a minister preaches with notes, or without. If he aims to impress the minds of his hearers, he may attain his end, by either of these modes of preaching. If he writes and reads his sermons, he may have as good sentiments, as good language, and as good feelings, as if he preaches extempore, without study, or premeditation. And if his discourses are filled with important sentiments, which are arranged in proper order, expressed in proper terms, and delivered with proper feelings, they can never fail of being pungent. It is true, he may sometimes preach better, if he does not write and read his sermons, than if he does. But yet it is equally true that he may sometimes preach not half so well without, as with writing and reading. Extempore discourses often have more heat, but less light, than written ones. It is difficult, on the whole, to determine which of these modes of preaching has the most advantages, and the fewest disadvantages. This must principally turn upon the peculiar taste of the hearers, and the peculiar talents of the preacher, who ought to be well acquainted with these two points, and to govern his conduct accordingly.

5. We learn from what has been said, the great absurdity of those ministers, who studiously avoid penetrating and impressing the minds of their hearers. Preachers in general are so well acquainted with human nature, and the great design of preaching, that they are capable of constructing and delivering their discourses in such a manner, as can scarcely fail of reaching the hearts and consciences of men. But many seem to be afraid of producing this effect, and accordingly take pains to avoid it. They mean to please, rather than to penetrate the minds of their hearers. And to accomplish this absurd and pernicious purpose, they make use of various means.

One is, to preach in a style above the comprehension of their hearers. This is a fault, from which the most plain and pungent preachers are not wholly free. No minister, perhaps, can always think of those words and phrases, which are levelled to the meanest capacity, and which ought always to be chosen, in explaining and inculcating the great and interesting truths of the gospel. One of the greatest masters of the English language, in his advice to a young clergyman, observes, that a plain and easy style, which is intelligible to the lowest class of hearers, is proper for the pulpit, and may be used before the most learned and polite assembly. But some preachers appear to choose a style which buries their ideas, and, of course, conceals their meaning from the understanding of their hearers. This takes off the whole force and pungency of divine truth, and is a gross perversion of the great end of preaching. The words of the wise are as goads, but the words of the unwise are smoother than oil.

Another way to prevent divine truth from making a too penetrating and painful impression upon the minds of men, is, to deliver it with a certain easy, graceful negligence. This mode of speaking is extremely agreeable to people in general, because it flatters them with the idea that it is of very little importance whether they believe, or disbelieve the doctrines of the gospel, or whether they perform or neglect the duties of religion. And so long as the preacher conveys this idea, and, by his own ease and negligence, indulges theirs, he completely gratifies their desire of hearing, and prevents their fear of feeling divine truths. People love to hear, but they hate to feel; and therefore they admire those ministers, who preach as though they preached not; and give them leave to hear as though they heard not. Accordingly, some preachers seem to be very fond of acquiring this mode of speaking, which will please their hearers, without disturbing their consciences.

Another way, which answers the same purpose, is, to preach smooth things, and silently pass over the more penetrating and

disagreeable truths of the gospel. Some ministers seem to take peculiar pains to avoid saying any thing about the character of God, the decrees of God, the sovereignty of God, the agency of God upon the hearts of men, the character of men by nature, and the immediate duty of all to yield unfeigned obedience, and unconditional submission, to their great Creator. They studiously avoid mentioning these truths, not because they are ignorant of their nature and tendency, but because they wish not to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers. And lest their smooth style, and smooth delivery, and smooth sentiments, should not effectually prevent the painful feelings of their hearers, they wholly omit the application of their discourses. They take pains not to disfigure their sermons, by the obsolete modes and phrases of doctrines, divisions, uses, or inferences. They throw their sentiments together in such a loose and desultory manner, that their discourses neither require, nor admit, a particular application to particular characters. This totally prevents their hearers from perceiving the connection, and feeling the force of the few truths which they actually deliver.

These are modes of preaching which many employ, and which, we presume, none can justify. Solomon and Christ, the prophets and apostles meant to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers; and, by the manifestation of the truth, to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. These are examples, which it is wise in preachers to follow, though it should give pain and even offence to their hearers.

6. If it be the wisdom and duty of ministers to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers, then they have no reason to complain of the most close and pungent preaching. This is disagreeable to human nature, and people are very apt to complain of it. Ahab king of Israel, hated the plainness and pungency of the prophet Micaiah. And he spoke it out, "I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Nor was he alone in disliking plain and pungent prophets. The people were of the same disposition, for which God severely reproves them by the mouth of Isaiah. "Go write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this is a rebellious people, which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." Human nature is still the same. People now are disposed to find fault with ministers for being too plain and pointed in preaching. There is not, perhaps, a single congregation in this land, who are all willing to have the great

and essential truths of the gospel clearly explained to them, and strongly impresed upon them. There are many, in most places, who will either leave their minister, or cause their minister to leave them, rather than to suffer him to penetrate and impress their minds by divine truth. Such flying from pungent to smooth preachers is a dreadful thing. God represents it so in his own people. "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so." If ministers are right, in preaching plainly and pungently, then people are certainly wrong in complaining of it. They act a most unreasonable as well as sinful part. Pungent preaching is for their own good, and they ought to desire it, and seek after it. It is their highest interest to have their minister penetrate their hearts, and discover to them the true state of their souls. They always desire such plainness and fidelity in other men, whom they employ to promote their temporal good. They wish their attorney to examine their cause with care, discover every flaw, and tell them the plain, naked truth. And they heartily desire their surgeon to probe their wounds to the bottom, and apply the most effectual remedies, though ever so painful and distressing to endure. Why then should they complain of their minister, for dealing plainly and faithfully with their souls? This is an absurdity in its own nature, an injury to their minister, and may be eternal destruction to themselves.

7. If it ought to be the aim of the minister to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers, then there is blame somewhere, if their minds are not penetrated and impressed. Either the minister does not aim to impress their minds, or they mean to resist the impressions of divine truth. But if the minister really means to impress the minds of his people, it will be very difficult for them not to feel the force of his preaching. "The words of the wise are as goads." This means, at least, that the words of the wise preacher will generally penetrate and impress the mind. It is true, hearers may be so inattentive and stupid, as not to understand the great truths of the gospel, when plainly and pungently delivered; and in that case, their minds will not be penetrated and impressed. But this rarely happens. A plain, pungent preacher will scarcely ever fail of making sensible impressions upon the minds of his people. The impressions, indeed, may be extremely different upon different persons. Some may feel pleased, and others displeased. Some may feel happy, and others unhappy. Some may feel comforted, and others feel reproved and condemned. Some may feel their hopes enlivened, and others feel their hopes totally

destroyed. If such impressions as these are not made upon the minds of hearers, it is generally owing to the want of pungent preaching. The blame, in the first instance, falls upon the minister. And he must be exceedingly criminal to preach so as to soothe and stupify, rather than to penetrate and impress the minds of his people. But, on the other hand, the blame will fall on the hearers, if they remain stupid and unfeeling under plain and pungent preaching. This is a sin which exposes those who are guilty of it, to the heaviest condemnation. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."

Let me now apply the thoughts which have been suggested, to him for whom they were principally designed.

Dear Sir,— You are this day dedicating yourself to the sacred and important work of preaching the gospel. Preaching is to be your business. And the business of preaching is to penetrate and impress the minds of men, by the force of divine truth. Make this, therefore, your supreme object in all your discourses. Never keep back any thing, which you verily believe will be profitable and penetrating. Shun not to exhibit, and to apply the great truths of the gospel to the minds of your people. Let their aim and desire be what it may, in hearing; let it be your aim and desire, in preaching, to fasten truth upon their consciences. Spare no pains in preparing your discourses, and neglect no proper method to make them pungent. The way is already paved for you. Your worthy and venerable colleague has set you an example of great plainness and pungency in preaching. And his success enforces his example.

You know, by your own experience, we trust, the natural stupidity, blindness and obstinacy of the human heart. And you know, that the word of God is mighty to bow and subdue the hearts of men. This knowledge will both qualify and dispose you to preach in the most plain and pungent manner. Nothing but a desire to please, or a fear to offend, can prevent your being a plain, penetrating, searching preacher. But these powerful temptations to unfaithfulness, you must, you will, constantly and obstinately resist. You come into the field in a favorable season, when it seems to be white already to the harvest. Be industrious and faithful, and you may expect a rich harvest of souls, who shall be your joy here, and your rejoicing for ever.

One word to this numerous assembly will conclude my discourse.

If the words of the wise and faithful ministers of Christ be so powerful and penetrating as we have heard, how much more irresistible and insupportable will the words of Christ himself be, at the great and last day! Then he will tell sin-

ners all that they ever heard, as well as all they ever did in their lives. Then he will make them hear all the sermons which they had neglected to hear, and make them feel all the truths which they had refused to feel. And then he will give divine truth such an energy, as to penetrate and impress their guilty consciences to all eternity. This will be a source of intolerable misery.

"The keen vibration of bright truth is hell."

Let all, therefore, who have hitherto resisted the preached gospel, be entreated to hearken to it speedily, while it may be a savor of life unto life to their souls. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The gospel will, sooner or later, penetrate the hearts of sinners. If they resist the force of it in time, they must feel the weight of it in eternity. "O that they were wise that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Amen.

SERMON VIII.

MINISTERS EXPOSED TO CORRUPTION BY THEIR PEOPLE.

ORDINATION OF REV. JOHN SMITH, AT SALEM, N. H., JANUARY 4, 1797.

But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee: Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house. — Ezekiel, ii. 8.

The children of Israel were once holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of their increase. They served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua. But ever after that memorable period, they began to lose the spirit of religion, and became more and more corrupt, until they were carried into captivity, as a just punishment for their deep declension. In this deplorable situation, they continued to harden themselves in sin, and to pine away in their iniquities, until every appearance of spiritual life was gone. Then God was pleased to send Ezekiel to prophesy over the valley of dry bones, in order to raise them from spiritual death to spiritual life. And to prepare him for his arduous task, he forewarned him of his danger, and charged him to guard against it. "Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel. — Be not afraid of them, — though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions; be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee: Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house."

This was the same as to say, "I know the degeneracy of the times. I know the corruption and obstinacy of the people. I know they will stop their ears and harden their hearts against divine truth. And I know that for this purpose, they will use every method, by words and looks, to corrupt your heart, poison your sentiments, and destroy your influence. But I warn you to beware of men; and never suffer yourself to be corrupted by those whom you are sent to reprove and reform." This divine caution applies to all who are called to bear the messages of God to men, and naturally leads us, on this occasion, to show,

I. That ministers are exposed to be corrupted by the people; and,

II. That it is their indispensable duty to guard against it.

I. Let us consider that ministers are exposed to be corrupted by the people.

Though this be a very humiliating truth to ministers as well as people, yet let us attend to the evidence of it with seriousness and impartiality. And here I would observe,

1. That ministers have been corrupted by the people. This was the unhappy case of Aaron. While Moses was detained on the mount, the people were uneasy, and came to Aaron, and desired him to make them an idol. Though he knew that he had no right to comply with this unreasonable request, yet he finally yielded to the importunity of the people, and made them a golden god. Accordingly, when Moses returned and reproved him for his conduct, he made no other excuse than the pressing importunity of the people. "And Moses said unto Aaron, what did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" This very question carries an implication that Aaron was corrupted. "And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot; thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." This was a base insinuation to the dishonor of Moses, and an artful address to the vanity of Aaron; which was exactly suited to corrupt his heart, and draw him from the path of duty. The event answered the desire and expectation of those who were set on mischief; for Aaron was corrupted and became "rebellious like that rebellious house." The same thing happened to the sons and successors of Aaron; for we find that they were always corrupt, when the people were corrupt. There was a great degeneracy in the time of the judges, when every man did what was right in his own eyes; and that day of declension proved a day of temptation to the priests, who were carried away by the stream of corruption. When Asa came to the

throne, we are told that "for a long season Israel had been without the true God, and without a teaching priest." A great number of the priests were actually put down, in the reign of Josiah, because they had fallen into the degeneracy of the times. And at the reformation in Hezekiah's day, there was such a scarcity of uncorrupted priests, that the Levites were called in to assist them in the discharge of their office. Indeed, it was so common for the priests to be involved in the corruptions of the people, that God generally reproved them both together. By Jeremiah he says, "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so." By the same prophet he says again, that he would remove Jerusalem from before his face, "because of all the evil of the children of Israel, and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, and their priests." By Ezekiel he says of Judea, "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean." By Micah he says of the house of Israel, "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money." By Zephaniah he says of the oppressing city, "She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God. Her princes within her are roaring lions, her judges are ravening wolves. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have polluted the sanctuary; they have done violence to the law."

Now if the priests were always corrupt, when the people were corrupt, then it is natural to conclude that they were, in some measure at least, corrupted by the people. But we are not left to mere conjecture in this case; for God himself complains of the people for being always disposed to corrupt their teachers. "I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not." They meant to corrupt the friends of virtue, and the ministers of religion, on purpose to destroy the influence of their example, and the force of their instructions and admonitions; and they very rarely failed of accomplishing their malignant purpose. The experience of ages, therefore, loudly proclaims that ministers are exposed to be drawn from their duty, and in-

volved in moral corruption, by the undue influence of the people.

2. The bare example of the people, in a day of declension, has a natural tendency to corrupt ministers. Moral corruption is contagious, and endangers all who are obliged to come within the sphere of its influence. When the people become cold and dull, and averse to every thing of a religious nature, ministers are apt to imbibe and manifest the same spirit. When the people become light and vain in their conversation, ministers are apt to countenance and imitate their levity. When the people grow rich, and gay, and luxurious, ministers are apt to fall into the same loose and corrupt habits. When the people indulge themselves in idleness, dissipation and vain amusements, ministers are apt to be allured into their company and become patrons and partakers of their sins. And when the people become loose in their sentiments and will not endure sound doctrine, ministers are apt to conceal or pervert the great truths of the gospel, and preach smooth things, to secure the applause and friendship of the enemies of truth. The day of degeneracy is a day of danger to ministers. The prevailing spirit and practice of the times naturally tend to cool their zeal, weaken their virtue, and injure both the matter and manner of their preaching. But, though they are exposed to be corrupted by the bare example of the people, yet,

3. They are in much greater danger of being corrupted, by the positive endeavors and exertions of the people to draw them into sin. A corrupt people feel themselves obliged to take this course, in order to resist the energy of plain and faithful preaching. They know the power of divine truth, the force of pious example, and the influence of godly ministers; and they feel unable to stand before these united means of conviction. To prevent, therefore, the pains of a wounded conscience, they endeavor, by various methods, to bring ministers over to their own side, and form them agreeably to their own taste. Some treat them with peculiar respect, and flatter their vanity, to make them more yielding and compliant. Some load them with kindness, and endeavor to draw them aside by the powerful cords of interest. Some invite them to their houses, and into their company and urge them to small, and seemingly harmless compliances, and so take advantage of their weakness. And some use more harsh and imperious methods, and attempt to frighten them from their virtue and integrity.

Such methods as these, we find the children of Israel often employed, to corrupt those who were sent to them as messengers of the Lord of hosts. Sometimes they attacked their virtue and innocence, "by giving them wine to drink." Some-

times "they said to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." Sometimes they threatened their prophets with the terror of their tongues; "Come," said they, "let us devise devices against Jeremiah,—and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." Sometimes they employed their frowning looks as well as hard words, to deter their teachers from their duty, and make them rebellious like themselves. And sometimes "they commanded their prophets, saying, prophesy not." This rough method Amaziah used, to silence the prophet Amos. "Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread and prophesy there; but prophesy not again any more at Bethel; for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court." And the council at Jerusalem laid the same imperious prohibition upon the apostles. After mature deliberation, "they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus." Jews and Gentiles are the same by nature, and therefore our Lord taught his ministers to expect the same treatment from the Gentiles, which the prophets had received from the Jews. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake;—for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." The conduct of both Jews and Gentiles towards the ministers of religion, is a demonstration of the natural disposition of mankind, to use every method in their power to corrupt the hearts and destroy the influence of those who are sent to instruct and reclaim them. We are all by this time convinced, I presume, that ministers are exposed to be corrupted by the people. But if they are exposed to this danger, then,

II. It is their indispensable duty to guard against it. "Son of man, hear what I say unto thee: Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house."

It is the dictate of common sense, that every man ought to avoid every danger which he knows, and which he is able to avoid. Ministers know the danger of being corrupted, and they are all able to guard against it. This appears from the conduct of many who have gone before them, in delivering the messages of God to men. The faithful prophets and priests, as well as pious apostles, felt their exposedness to the frowns and flatteries of the world; but they nobly resisted every effort to allure, or to awe them from their duty. The prophet Samuel, who was early called to deliver the messages of God to

Israel, faithfully discharged his office, and maintained his innocence and integrity to the last. Though he lived in a day of declension, and the people were weary of the divine government, yet he would never yield to their corrupt inclinations any farther than God allowed him to gratify their wishes; so that he was able, just before his death, to make the most solemn appeal to their consciences, that he had walked uprightly before them all the days of his life. Elijah singly and nobly resisted the frowns of the people, the reproach of the prophets, and the wrath of the king. Jeremiah was surrounded by enemies who threatened to defame his character, and to destroy his life, unless he would forbear to reprove them for their sins, and admonish them of their danger; but he bravely despised their threats, and faithfully discharged his duty. And the primitive preachers of the gospel displayed no less magnanimity and firmness, in the course of their ministry. When Peter and John were commanded not to preach in the name of Jesus, by the most dignified characters in the Jewish nation, they boldly replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." But Paul met with the most opposition, and accordingly manifested the most Christian fortitude and fidelity in preaching the gospel. "Do I," says he to the Galatians, "do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." He assures the Thessalonians that he had made it his maxim as a minister, to please God rather than men. "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts." The conduct of these faithful servants of God, gives us clear and striking evidence that ministers are able, and therefore ought, to guard against all the peculiar dangers of their office. And to impress this plain and practical duty the more deeply on our minds, I would observe,

1. That God has expressly commanded ministers to guard against the attempts of those who would corrupt their hearts, and draw them aside from the path of duty. His command to Ezekiel on this subject is extremely pointed and solemn: "Son of man I send thee to the children of Israel.—Be not afraid of them,—though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions; be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious. But thou son of man, hear what I say unto thee; be not thou

rebellious, like that rebellious house." Very similar to this, is the command which Christ gave to his apostles, and to all their successors in the ministry. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." "Beware of men." These commands from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, bind all the ministers of the gospel to guard against the peculiar dangers of their sacred office, and to repel every temptation to unfaithfulness. It is their indispensable duty, therefore, to view mankind in the light in which the great Searcher of hearts has represented them; and to be as careful to avoid their corrupting influence, as they would be to avoid the jaws of a wolf, or the poison of a scorpion.

2. They will forfeit the divine presence and protection, if they suffer themselves to be corrupted; and therefore it is their indispensable duty to guard against it. While they continue faithful to God, and plainly deliver his messages to men, he has graciously promised to be with them, and to preserve them from the power of their enemies. Upon this condition, he promised to strengthen and support his prophet Ezekiel. "Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them." "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house." The same promise of support he gave to Jeremiah, on the same condition. "Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord." "Behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." Christ also graciously promises to be with his ministers, so long as they strictly adhere to his precepts and appointments. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always." These gracious promises are all conditional, and are so explained by God himself. He says to Jeremiah, "Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them, all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them." And this awful threatening, God tells the corrupt priests in the days of Malachi, he had actually executed upon them. "Therefore have I also made you con-

temptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law." Now, ministers have great reason to desire the divine presence and protection; for if God be with them, who can be against them? And they have as much reason to fear his departure and displeasure; for if God be against them, who can be for them? This serious and weighty consideration ought to make them extremely careful to regard God more than men, and never incur his displeasure, in order to gain the favor, or to avoid the frowns, of their fellow worms.

3. If ministers suffer themselves to be corrupted by the people, it destroys their usefulness. If they imbibe the spirit of the people, and feel as they feel; if they follow the example of the people, and conduct as they conduct; or if they condescend to preach smooth things to please the people; they will totally destroy their ministerial usefulness. For, as soon as the people perceive that they regard them more than God, and will prostitute their consciences to gratify their unreasonable desires, they will despise their persons and neglect their preaching. Time-serving ministers generally have but few hearers. All men, whether good or bad, inwardly despise loose and unprincipled ministers, let their talents be what they may. And the same degree of criminality, which would be scarcely observable in other men, is sufficient to destroy the character and usefulness of those who sustain the sacred office of the ministry. No men are so completely useless and contemptible, as those ministers who have lost all appearance of religion, and become visibly conformed to the spirit and manners of the world. For, as our Saviour says, "they are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Hence the dignity of their character, and the importance of their office, lay ministers of the gospel under solemn obligations to keep themselves unspotted from the world, and to preach the preaching which God bids them, whether their people will hear, or whether they will forbear.

I must observe once more,

4. If ministers suffer themselves to be carried down the stream of corruption, they become not only useless, but destructive to the people. Corrupt ministers are always corrupters. The whole tendency of their practice and preaching is, to corrupt and destroy the souls of their people. Though they have lost the power of doing good, yet they retain the power of doing evil. They can do more than other men, to pull down the kingdom of Christ, and build up the kingdom of Satan. And as they are more capable, so they are more disposed, than other men,

to stifle the spirit of religion, oppose the doctrines of the gospel, and strengthen the hearts and hands of the wicked. This is the character which God gives of the corrupt teachers in Israel. He says, "Shemaiah taught rebellion against the Lord." He says, the prophets of Samaria and Jerusalem made Israel to err, strengthened the hands of evil doers, and caused profaneness to go forth into all the land. When the people have formed their ministers after their own hearts, and made them rebellious like themselves, their ministers will then fit them fast for destruction. So God declares to Israel, by his faithful prophet Hosea: "There shall be like people, like priest, and I will punish them for their ways." And our Lord says, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Thus ministers will destroy both their own souls and the souls of their people, if they suffer themselves to be corrupted by them. And can there be a more solemn and awful consideration than this, to constrain them to abstain from all appearance of evil, to guard against all the dangers of their office, and to discharge all the important duties of it with fidelity and zeal? This is our indispensable and infinitely important duty.

Having illustrated the danger and duty of ministers, I now proceed to a few reflections, which naturally grow out of the subject.

1. It is now a very dangerous day to ministers, in this young and flourishing republic. The people have fallen into a great and general declension. As they have increased, so they have sinned. They have lost their original piety and virtue, and become extremely loose both in practice and in principle. Every species of moral corruption has spread through every part of our nation, and seized all ranks and classes of men. Arminianism, Universalism and Deism, have more or less infected all our towns and parishes, and led multitudes to renounce those duties and doctrines of religion in which they were early educated by their pious parents and faithful ministers. This day of declension among the people, is a day of great danger to the preachers of the gospel. While iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, even the most faithful ministers of the gospel are in danger of falling into the degeneracy of the times. This is very evident from what has been said, and still more evident from the conduct of those who sustain the sacred character. Many ministers have already begun to degenerate with a degenerate people. Some have lost that spirit of devotion, that strictness of life, and that purity of sentiment, which was once so conspicuous in the preachers of the gospel. And some have begun to yield to the corrupt humors and unreasonable desires of the people, in points of serious and weighty importance.

Some yield to the vicious, and neglect to condemn and reprove their fashionable vices. Some yield to the heterodox, and neglect to condemn and expose their corrupt sentiments. Some yield to moral sinners, and neglect to preach those doctrines of the gospel which are so disagreeable to their carnal hearts. And some condescend even to dispense with the laws of Christ, and admit those to enjoy the ordinances of the gospel, who are visibly destitute of the scriptural qualifications. These are striking instances of ministers' yielding to the corruptions of the times, contrary to the dictates of their minds. And such instances as these are very numerous, and to be found all over the land. How many ministers neither preach nor practice according to their own sentiments, through fear of offending, and through desire of pleasing, the people? This conduct weakens the hands of faithful ministers, and strengthens the hands of those who wish to corrupt them. The present prospect is, that those who are the light of the world will lose their lustre, and those who are the salt of the earth will lose their savor, and there will be like people, like priest. Trying times for ministers are probably coming. And let us all, who think we stand, take heed lest we fall.

2. Ministers need, at this day, to be well qualified for their office. Though religion has decayed, yet knowledge has increased. There are men of letters, or at least men of information, in every religious society. The people in general are much more capable now, than they were formerly, of judging of the talents and qualifications of ministers. And as they are more critical in discerning, so they are more severe in censuring, every ministerial defect or imperfection. The corruption of the times appears in nothing more visibly, than in the united opposition of the people to sacred things, and to sacred persons. They seem determined to bring down ministers, and make reprisals upon them, for their having so long possessed the public esteem and confidence. Those, therefore, who enter into the ministry at such a day as this, need to be well qualified for their great and arduous work. If they assume the sacred office, without any consistent scheme of religious sentiments, or any considerable stock of theological knowledge, they will very probably injure the cause which they ought to defend and promote. For people have lost their former implicit faith in the opinions of ministers, and pay no respect to their bare assertions. They demand evidence for every thing which their teachers call upon them to believe and practice. And this renders it necessary for ministers to be mighty in the scriptures, and expert in reasoning upon divine subjects. They ought to be able to meet Deists, Universalists, and all gainsayers, upon

their own ground, and expose the fallacy and weakness of their boasted arguments. There is reason to believe that the late rapid increase of error and infidelity in this land, is partly owing to the ignorance of ministers, who have never formed any clear and consistent scheme of divinity in their own minds. They have suffered error and infidelity to take root in their own congregations, through a sense of their own insufficiency to maintain and defend the truth. And this has led infidels and others, to represent the clergy as a weak, ignorant, superstitious set of men. Hence it highly concerns the ministers of the gospel, at this day, to wipe off such aspersions from their order, by possessing and displaying that knowledge which may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. It is presumption for any man to undertake to preach the gospel, without being able to prove the inspiration of the scriptures, and to defend the important doctrines which the Bible contains. This is what the people now justly expect; and if they are disappointed, it will injure both them and those who profess to be their religious instructers.

But prudence, as well as knowledge, is a necessary qualification for a minister. He needs this to enable him to exhibit divine truth in the most profitable manner, and to escape those snares which the enemies of truth will always endeavor to lay for him. Our Lord was a prudent preacher. His prudence, however, did not consist in taking the safest methods to conceal disagreeable doctrines, but in delivering disagreeable doctrines at a proper time, and in proper expressions. How often did his enemies attempt to entangle him in his talk! And how often did he confound and silence them! There are many at this day who feel the same opposition to the ministers of the gospel that the Jews felt towards Christ; and therefore they need to be wise and prudent, as he was, in order to avoid the same snares and dangers which he by his prudence avoided. Accordingly he has expressly enjoined it upon them, to "be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

But ministers of the gospel, at this day of declension, need large measures of grace, as well as of knowledge and prudence. They need to be crucified to the world, and the world to them, by the cross of Christ. They ought to be willing to take up their cross daily, and endure the afflictions of the gospel. They ought to seek the honor which cometh from God, and renounce that which cometh from men. They ought to savor of the things which be of God, and not those which be of men. They ought to love God, and Christ, and the souls of men so much, as to be willing to be poor and despised and abused by men, in the faithful discharge of their duty. They

ought, in a word, to be so holy, and harmless, and pure, and heavenly minded, as to be proof against all the frowns and flatteries of those who wish to weaken their hands, discourage their hearts, and destroy their influence. If those who enter upon the ministry are possessed of these superior qualifications, they may hope, through the divine goodness, to war a good warfare, to keep the faith, and endure unto the end; so as to receive that crown of righteousness which is reserved for those who are faithful unto death. But if any presume to run before they are sent, and to preach before they are qualified, they have reason to expect that they shall one day fall into the corruption of the times, and become a reproach to the sacred order, and a stumbling to those whom they ought to have reproved and reclaimed.

3. It is the duty of all good men, at this day especially, to aid and assist the ministers of the gospel in the discharge of their office. No men have greater difficulties to encounter than ministers, and therefore no men stand in more need of assistance than they. They are pleading the cause of all good men, against the united opposition of all bad men. Good men, therefore, ought to do all in their power to countenance and assist them. And in compassion to ministers, God has been pleased to lay his special commands upon all good men to help them. The duties which good men owe to ministers are plainly pointed out, and strongly enjoined in the word of God. I will read a number of plain passages to this purpose. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." "We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." "Remember them that have the rule over you; who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow; considering the end of their conversation." "Brethren, pray for us." "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that believe not." "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." These precepts require good men, in particular, to hear their ministers, to revere their ministers, to esteem their ministers, and to pray for their ministers. It is high time for all real christians to awake from their stupor, and by their prayers and exertions, to aid the ministers of the gos-

pel in their difficult and important work. If Christian professors would unite with Christian ministers, in the common cause of Christianity, we might reasonably hope that religion would gain ground, and vice and infidelity would every where fall before it.

But it is time to conclude the discourse, with such addresses as are usual on such an occasion as this. And, in the first place, I turn to him, who is about to take the pastoral care of this people.

Dear Sir,— You are entering upon a work of great difficulty and danger. You will fare better than any who have gone before you in the ministry, if you should not meet with any who wish and endeavor to draw you from the path of duty. The people to whom you are going to minister, we presume, are as well disposed towards the gospel, and towards the preachers of it, as religious societies in general. But the corruptions of the times have reached this as well as other places. You are, therefore, entering upon the work of the ministry at a very dangerous period. And though we hope you are really friendly to God and to his cause, yet the seeds of rebellion are not entirely destroyed in your own heart. There is something still within you, which exposes you to be moved from your steadfastness. Moral corruption spreads its poison very insensibly, and often gains the possession of the heart before the man is aware. You cannot, therefore, be too watchful against its pernicious influence. To defeat the designs of those who may wish to weaken your hands and heart in the cause of God, you cannot take a more direct and effectual method, than to become "an ensample to the flock." It is the proper business of ministers to set, and not to follow example. Instead of suffering yourself to be formed to the spirit and manners of others, make it your constant aim and endeavor to form others to the spirit of the gospel and the life of religion. If your people perceive this to be your steady and governing principle of action, they will have but little hope, and of consequence but little courage, to make the attempt of corrupting either your heart, your life, or your preaching. If you appear to regard God more than man, and the good of your people more than their censure or applause, they will feel a power in your preaching, and force in your example, which they can neither gainsay nor resist; especially if you discover at the same time a readiness to please, and even to oblige them, in all things which are consistent with the duties of your office. Conscience is always on the side of the faithful minister, and against every rebellious child of Adam. And it is this which gives every minister, who speaks for God, and with his words, the ascendency over the most hardened and obstinate sinners. Only fear God, and

make his word the standard of your preaching, and you need not fear to deliver the most disagreeable truths to your people, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they will feel that there is a man of God among them.

A good soldier esteems it an honor to be called to the post of danger. And if you are a good soldier of Jesus Christ, you will esteem it an honor to plead his cause in a day of declension. It is a cause which will certainly prevail somewhere; and if you do your duty, you may humbly hope that it will prevail in this place. But, should you be so unhappy as to find religion decaying among your own people, and among those around you, let it not damp your spirit, but awaken you to be more fervent in your devotions, more indefatigable in your studies, more zealous in your preaching, and more holy and exemplary in your living. The united exertions of the enemies of religion, ought to rouse the united exertions of those who are set for the defence of the gospel, to put a check upon the growing spirit of irreligion; and we hope you will not be wanting, in your desires and endeavors, to awaken stupid sinners to a sense of their danger and duty.

There can be no neuters in the cause of Christ. He that is not for him, must be against him; and he that gathereth not with him, must scatter abroad. You must be conformed either to Christ or to the world. You must either preach rebellion against God, or bear your public testimony against it, both in preaching and in practice. On this day of your solemn consecration to the sacred office, you are solemnly called upon to choose whom you will serve, whether Christ or his enemies. Be entreated to make a wise choice, and never depart from it, because the consequences will be infinitely important. So our Lord hath taught you, in the most striking language: "Who then" says he "is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Son of man, hear what your Lord saith unto you, and be not thou rebellious, like such a rebellious servant; but be thou faithful unto death, and the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give you a crown of life which shall never fade away.

The church and congregation in this place, will now indulge

me in a free and friendly address to them, on this solemn occasion.

Brethren and Friends, — Behold the man, whom you have so unanimously chosen to take the pastoral care of your souls. Receive him as a messenger of the Lord of hosts, and seek the law at his mouth. Esteem him highly in love for his work's sake. Consider him as a minister as well as a man, and pay respect to the minister in the man. Cease not to pray for him, and to join with him in building up the Redeemer's kingdom. In this, and in this alone, you may reasonably desire him to be one with you; and in this, and in this alone, will he be willing to join with you, if he is a faithful servant of God. Never desire him to regard you more than God; and never become his enemies because he tells you the truth. This will be distressing to him, and destructive to yourselves. He cannot serve you any longer than he serves God. If you should be so unwise as to desire him to conform to your unreasonable wishes, and so successful as to bring him to a conformity, you will injure both him and yourselves. It appears from what has been said, however, that the people are extremely prone to corrupt their ministers; and this affords ground to fear, that this people, who have been so remarkably unanimous in the choice of him who is now to be set over them in the Lord, may nevertheless become disposed to weaken his hands and discourage his heart in the service of their souls. Should you endeavor to do this, and succeed in it, how dreadful will be your situation when you come to see, at the last day, that you have grieved the heart and destroyed the influence of one, who desired, and endeavored to promote, your eternal good! But, on the other hand, what can afford you greater joy, than to be presented before the universe, as friends to God, and to them who were workers together with him in building up his kingdom? You and your pastor are both in danger. He is in danger from you, and you are in danger from him. The connection which may be this day formed between you, will be infinitely interesting to you all. We beseech you, brethren and friends, to take heed how you hear your minister, how you feel towards him, and how you treat him. He can do but very little without you. He needs your love, your prayers, and your assistance. He is called, like young Samuel, to bear the messages of God to you, in a day of great declension. And if it be his heart's desire and prayer to God, that you may be saved, let it be your heart's desire and prayer to God, that he may be both faithful and successful. And if you receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, you shall receive a prophet's reward. Amen.

SERMON IX.

PURPOSE OF REDEMPTION.

ORDINATION OF REV. JOSEPH EMERSON, TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE THIRD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN BEVERLY, SEPT. 21, 1803.

To THE intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. — EPH. iii. 10, 11.

THE Jews were the seed of Abraham, to whom the promises of the Messiah were made; and from this circumstance they were led to imagine that salvation was confined to them, in distinction from all other nations. This was their prevailing opinion, both before and after the crucifixion of Christ. Nor were the apostles themselves, at first, altogether divested of this national prejudice. But Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, was early favored with more enlightened and enlarged views of the gospel. He knew that it comprised the whole counsel of God; that it was intended for the benefit of all nations, and that it would, in its final operation, give the brightest display of the divine attributes to all intelligent beings. This sublime idea of the gospel inspired him with gratitude to Christ, for giving him the peculiar privilege of unfolding the great scheme of salvation to all men, whether Jews or Gentiles: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by

Jesus Christ, to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

These last words, in this connection, naturally lead us to inquire who are meant by the church; when God formed his purpose of redeeming the church; and why he formed this gracious design.

I. Let us consider who are meant by the church.

Paul sometimes uses this appellation to denote a single society of christians; but he more commonly uses the term to denote the whole number of the elect, or all who shall finally be sanctified and saved. This portion of mankind he considers as composing the church universal, which is a spiritual body, of which Christ is the spiritual head. To this purpose he speaks in the first chapter of this epistle. He says, God hath set Christ "at his own right hand in the heavenly places far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body." In this comprehensive sense the apostle uses the term church in the text. He means to signify by it the whole church of the first born in heaven, or all who shall be set up as monuments to display the riches of divine grace to the whole intelligent creation.

Let us next inquire,

II. When the Deity formed his purpose of redeeming the church from among men.

God was under no natural necessity of forming this or any other purpose. His nature did not irresistibly constrain him either to create or to redeem the world. It depended solely upon his will, whether he should bring angels and men into existence; whether he should make them in his own moral image; whether he should suffer any of them to fall into sin; and whether, if any of them should fall into sin, he would save the whole or only a part of the guilty, through the sufferings and death of a Mediator. In a word, God was perfectly free and voluntary in forming the whole scheme of redemption. Hence it is called "his purpose," "his counsel," and "the good pleasure of his will." But still it is a question, when he formed this benevolent purpose, whether in time or eternity. The text tells us it was in eternity: "According to the *eternal purpose*, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." All the elect are said to have been "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foun-

dation of the world." And St. John tells us, he "saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth." These are plain declarations that the gospel scheme of salvation was formed in eternity; which perfectly accords with every just idea of the divine character. God was self existent, independent, and absolutely perfect from eternity. He was infinitely able to form his whole plan of operation before he began to operate; and no good reason could possibly exist for his neglecting, a single moment, to fix all future events. Indeed, his own moral rectitude laid him under moral obligation to form the glorious scheme of redemption from the early days of eternity. But here, perhaps, some may doubt whether it be proper to distinguish the divine purpose from the divine nature; or whether actual willing, choosing and determining may be ascribed to the Deity, because these exercises seem to imply some degree of deliberation and suspense. The answer is, though imperfect creatures often deliberate and suspend their judgment, before they choose or determine, yet God, who is absolutely perfect, could never have occasion for deliberation or suspense. As he possessed, from eternity, every divine perfection, so he had, from eternity, an intuitive view of all possible beings, objects and events; which enabled him to form the best possible scheme of things, as early as his own existence. We can as easily conceive of an eternal purpose, as of an eternal power, wisdom or goodness. We can as easily conceive of eternal motion as eternal rest. We can as easily conceive of God's determining from eternity, as of his existing from eternity. And if we only admit the truth of his existing from eternity, we must necessarily admit the truth of his decreeing from eternity to redeem the church through the atonement of Christ. Any other supposition must carry the idea of imperfection and mutability in Him who is without variableness or shadow of turning. The way is now prepared to inquire,

III. Why God was graciously pleased to devise and adopt, from eternity, the great scheme of man's redemption. To this inquiry the apostle gives a general answer in the text. He says, it was "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." Moved by infinite benevolence, the Deity determined to make himself known through the medium of his works; and, among all possible works, he saw the work of redemption to be the best adapted to answer this glorious and important purpose. He knew that his creatures could not see the natural and moral excellency of his nature, unless he actually displayed himself in his works. It was their im-

perfection, therefore, which rendered any exhibitions of his glory necessary. Could they have looked directly into his mind, as he can into theirs, there would have been no occasion for the creation of the heavens and the earth, or for the existence of natural or moral evil, or for the incarnation and sufferings of Christ, or for any of the visible scenes and retributions of eternity. All the ends of creation might have been completely answered, by the bare existence of rational, holy and immortal creatures, had such creatures been capable of seeing all the perfections of God, without the medium of his works. But though the imperfection of created beings was the general reason why God chose to act himself out before their eyes, yet it may be still farther inquired, why he chose to act himself out in the work of redemption. In answer to this, the following observations may perhaps afford some light and satisfaction.

1. God chose the work of redemption, because it was the only one in which he could display all his perfections before the minds of his intelligent creatures. He might have created different objects, and fixed different orders and series of events; but none of these could have unfolded his whole character. This will be evident, if we only consider the various modes of operation which he might have chosen and pursued.

He might have formed just such a material system as now exists. He might have formed angels and men holy and happy, and preserved them from sin and misery for ever. This is certainly a supposable case; because the same divine influence which first formed them in the divine image, could have preserved that image through every period of their existence. And had God treated angels and men in this manner, he would have displayed great goodness to the inhabitants of heaven and earth, and established a state of things almost infinitely different from what has actually taken place. But such a mode of divine operation would not have discovered either the justice, or grace of God; because perfectly innocent creatures could not have been proper objects of either vindictive justice, or pardoning mercy.

Again: God might have preserved both angels and men in a state of holiness and happiness for a certain season, and then subjected only a few individuals to endless sin and misery. This mode of conduct would have displayed divine benevolence to the holy and happy part of the moral system, and divine sovereignty and justice to the sinful and miserable part. But still, this order of things would have left forgiving grace entirely undiscovered.

Once more: We may suppose that God might have preserved angels and men in a holy and happy state, for ages and ages,

and then annihilated the whole moral creation. This, like the last mentioned series of events, would have for ever concealed from the view of creatures the sovereign grace of God, in forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.

These three schemes of divine operation are the only ones which could have been devised, different from the scheme of redemption revealed in the gospel. And since neither of these could have displayed all the perfections of God, this was a good reason why he should prefer the work of redemption to all other ways of making himself known. In this way, he can cause "his grace to reign through righteousness unto eternal life, in them that are saved; and, at the same time, manifest his justice in the everlasting punishment of the finally impenitent and incorrigible. And as this was the only possible way of displaying all his perfections, so he determined, from eternity, to exhibit his whole character to all intelligent beings in the face of Jesus Christ.

2. Another reason why God devised and adopted the work of redemption, was, because there was no other way by which he could so clearly and fully manifest any of his perfections. We have just observed that there was no other way by which he could discover all his perfections; but we now farther observe, that there was no other by which he could display any of his perfections, in their highest beauty and glory. The other methods of manifesting himself, which have been mentioned, would have given created beings some apprehension of some of his natural and moral attributes; but the method of redeeming love displays them all in the clearest and strongest light.

To illustrate this general idea, let us begin with the attribute of divine *wisdom*, which the apostle particularly mentions in the text. He says, it was the intent of God in redeeming the church, to make known his manifold wisdom to all the principalities and powers in the heavenly world. And what other method could have been so well adapted to display this divine attribute in all its glory? The plan of redemption is the deepest design that could be formed, and the most surpassing all created wisdom. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." The united wisdom of angels and men could never have discovered the way of reconciling justice and mercy in the pardon of sinners, by the incarnation and death of the divine Redeemer. Besides, the way of saving sinners through the atonement of Christ, displays not only the deepest, but the most manifold wisdom. It is the most complicated scheme conceivable. Though God had created as many worlds as there are sands on the sea shore, and made as many species of creatures as he has made individuals; yet he

could not have displayed such manifold wisdom in the formation and government of such a system, as he has displayed in raising up the church out of the ruins of the apostacy. This scheme combines and contrasts the most opposite things in nature, and brings them all into subserviency to one great and ultimate end. It makes sin promote holiness, misery promote happiness, darkness promote light, confusion promote order, and the greatest discord promote the most intimate and inviolable union. To adapt all these things in order, in weight, and in measure, to each other, so as to promote the greatest amount of holiness and happiness in the universe, displays the greatest depth and extent of divine wisdom; and must finally constrain all intelligent and holy beings to cry out, in raptures of admiration and gratitude, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

The *power* of God might, indeed, have been seen in the creation, preservation and government of perfectly holy and obedient creatures; but this divine attribute is more illustriously displayed in carrying on the work of redemption. In this work, the exceeding greatness of God's power is exerted, in subduing the hearts of sinners, and in maintaining his throne and authority in the hearts of believers. Nor is this all; for all the powers of darkness are combined against the members of the church militant, and it requires the continual exertion of God's omnipotence to restrain and conquer all his and their enemies. So that the power of God is much more visibly displayed, in earth and in hell, in governing his rebellious creatures, than it could have been in reigning over entirely dutiful and loyal subjects. Again:

God gives the brightest display of his *goodness*, as well as of his power and wisdom, in the work of redemption. This, many are slow of heart to believe. They imagine God would have discovered more goodness in preserving angels and men in a state of perpetual holiness and happiness, than he has done by suffering sin and misery to enter into the world, and saving only a part of mankind from endless ruin, through the death and mediation of Christ. For, though the plan of redemption, which involves sin and misery, may raise the general happiness of the universe to a great and glorious height; yet they still apprehend that God might have formed a system without natural or moral evil, which would have more fully displayed his infinite benevolence. Might not God, they ask, by creating more worlds, and more intelligent creatures, with more enlarged powers and faculties, have produced much more happiness than can result from the work of redemption? Another question will fully answer this. Did infinite wisdom and good-

ness discern and choose the best plan possible? If this be answered in the affirmative, the unavoidable consequence is, that the plan of redemption is the very best plan, to promote the highest good of the universe. And it must of necessity produce this effect; because it most fully and clearly displays the whole weight of the divine character, which is absolutely necessary to the highest felicity of God and all holy beings. Hence the scheme of redemption will finally display the goodness of God to the best advantage, by making it appear to all intelligences that he has raised the happiness of the universe to a higher degree than it was possible to raise it in any other way.

Farthermore: God's *holiness*, or hatred of sin, is set in the most amiable and striking light in the work of redemption. He would have manifested the purity of his nature, had he doomed all the human race, as he did the fallen angels, to hopeless ruin; but the sufferings and death of Christ, in the room of sinners, have given a brighter display of his vindictive justice, than could have been given by any punishment inflicted upon the guilty. All intelligent beings must look to the cross of Christ to discover the strongest expressions of God's displeasure against sin. There divine justice appears in its perfect purity, and free from all mixture of partiality or malevolence. God set forth his Son as a propitiation for sin, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. And Christ proclaimed his righteousness in actions which spoke louder than words, and which gave the highest testimony to the whole universe that he perfectly hates sin, whilst he forgives the penitent and believing sinner. It is also the nature and tendency of the gospel to raise up vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. The gift of a Saviour, the offers of mercy, the means used to bring them to repentance, the strivings of the Spirit, together with the patience and forbearance of God, give the impenitent an opportunity of filling up the measure of their guilt, and of preparing themselves for the most signal displays of divine justice, in their future and eternal punishment. So that the amiable and awful attribute of divine justice will be far more clearly displayed through the medium of the gospel, than it could have been through any other medium.

The same may be said of the *sovereignty* of God. It is true the whole chain of created existence, from the highest to the lowest link, discovers divine sovereignty. There is a visible superiority and inferiority among all the creatures of God, from the first angel down to the meanest insect. And this diversity in the powers and capacities of intelligent and unintelligent beings, discovers the sovereignty of their great Creator. But still his sovereignty appears in a far more interesting light, in doing

what he will with his own, and disposing of the several grades of created natures according to his own absolute pleasure. How often and how clearly has he displayed his sovereignty, in carrying on the work of redemption! He has provided a Saviour for fallen men, and left fallen angels to perish without remedy. He has sent the gospel to one nation, and not to another. He has bestowed his special grace upon one person, and not upon another. He has had compassion on whom he would have compassion, and whom he would he has hardened. He has decreed the characters and conditions of all moral agents, from eternity. And he will dispose of all exactly according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. When the great work of redemption is finished, it will give an astonishing display of divine sovereignty towards every created being in the universe.

We have already observed that the work of redemption discovers the *grace* of God, and we must here add that it displays his grace in the brightest colors. To devise the scheme of salvation was a stretch of grace, to which the thoughts of finite creatures could never have soared, had it not been discovered in the face of Christ; but the means to accomplish this gracious purpose are still more astonishing. God knew it could not be effected without the most extraordinary exertions and the most extraordinary sacrifices. He knew he must sacrifice the holiness and happiness of myriads of angels and men, and, what was infinitely more than all this, that he must sacrifice on the cross his dearly beloved Son, who was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. The scheme of redemption is so constructed, that not only the effects wrought, but the means used, conspire to display the height and depth, the length and breadth, of divine grace. Had God pardoned all the guilty, without the death of a substitute, he would have displayed real grace. Had he pardoned a part of the guilty, through the death of a mere creature, he would have displayed sovereign grace. But in his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, he displays not only sovereign grace, but sovereign grace in the most sovereign manner, and at the highest possible expense. The infinite pains he has taken to sanctify and save the church, will for ever display the exceeding riches of his grace to principalities and powers, as well as to the distinguished monuments of his sovereign mercy. Thus it appears, that the work of redemption displays not only the manifold wisdom of God, but all his other perfections, in a more clear and illustrious manner than they could have been displayed through any other medium. And this was a weighty reason why God formed his eternal purpose of redeeming the

sinful children of men through the death and mediation of the Lord of glory. But,

3. There was another important reason why God determined to make himself known by the work of redemption. He saw it was necessary, not only to display all his perfections, and to display them all in the clearest manner, but also to prepare the minds of all moral beings to view them with the greatest attention and sensibility. He meant not only to give them an opportunity to see himself, but to awaken their attention, and fix it upon his great and amiable character. And nothing could be better adapted to this end than to place them in a situation which would render all the displays of his glory highly interesting to themselves. Accordingly he devised and adopted the work of redemption, which will eventually place every mortal being in a situation to view all the divine perfections in the most interesting light. It has placed all accountable creatures in a state of probation; which is of all situations the most critical and important, because it suspends their future and eternal interests upon their conduct, during a short if not an uncertain period. It has also connected good and bad angels with good and bad men, and made them all instrumental in forming each other's characters, and preparing each other for their final condition. And when the work of redemption is finished, it will fix them all in such different and interesting circumstances, that they can never see nor contemplate each other, without seeing God, and feeling the whole weight of his infinite perfections. Where will the elect angels be able to turn their eyes, without being struck with the sovereignty of God in making them such holy and happy creatures? Where will the non-elect angels be able to turn their eyes, without being struck with the sovereignty of God in the whole course of his conduct towards them, both in heaven and in hell? Where will the church of the first born be able to turn their eyes, without being struck with the sovereignty of God in forming them vessels of mercy, and making them kings and priests, through the blood of the Lamb? And where will lost men be able to turn their eyes, without being struck with the sovereignty of God, in giving them existence, offering them mercy, and leaving them to perish in their sins for ever? Neither the happy nor the miserable will be able to fix their attention upon any created or uncreated object, without a lively sense of the manifold wisdom, the sovereign grace and awful justice of God. While the inhabitants of heaven behold the smoke of the torments of the damned, they will view all the divine attributes with joyful admiration; and while the spirits in prison realize the raptures of joy and praise in the mansions of the blessed, they will painfully feel the full

weight of all the perfections of the Deity. In a word, the winding up of the gospel scheme of salvation will turn the attention of all created beings upon God himself, and constrain them to see and feel his character, with the highest sensibility, to all eternity. Thus we see some wise and holy reasons, why God formed his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord; or why he chose to make himself known to principalities, and powers, and all other intelligent creatures, through the medium of Christ in the work of redemption.

It now remains to improve the subject.

1. If God freely chose from eternity to make himself known by the work of redemption, then we may safely conclude that this work was not devised for the purpose of mending or repairing the moral system. The Sublapsarians suppose that God originally intended to make the moral creation perfectly holy and happy; but the defection of Lucifer and the apostacy of Adam defeated his first and best design. In this unhappy case, therefore, to repair as much as possible the injuries done to the moral system, he devised the scheme of raising up from the ruins of the apostacy a pure and holy church, to display the riches of his grace towards the vessels of mercy. But if what has been said be true, there is no foundation for such an opinion as this, which is a plain impeachment of the divine character. It appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that God comprehended, in his eternal purpose, all the sin and misery, as well as all the holiness and happiness, which ever have, or ever will come into existence; so that the apostacy of both angels and men was once one essential part of the scheme of redemption. God saw it was absolutely necessary that both moral and natural evils should exist, in order to open the way for the most complete manifestation of his own glory, and, therefore, comprised these evils in his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Hence he has never had the least occasion to revise, correct, or amend his original design, or to repair any absolute injury done to his perfect system. Every thing in creation and providence has taken place just as he always intended; and not a single event has ever happened to mar his character, or disconcert his first designs. One event has always followed another in the very order and connection which he established from eternity; and one event will still follow another in that order and connection, until the great and complicated work of redemption is brought to its final consummation, and the whole universe is filled with the brightest displays of the divine glory.

2. If God formed the scheme of salvation from eternity, then to deny the doctrine of the divine decrees, is to rob him of all

his glory in the work of redemption. The apostle calls this work, "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." And if he devised this wise and benevolent design, then all the glory of it justly belongs to him. It is the dictate of reason, to ascribe the merit or glory of any important undertaking to the agent who formed the wise and useful design. If, therefore, before the foundation of the world, or the existence of any created being, God himself concerted, adjusted and adopted the whole plan of salvation, the whole glory of it is all his own. The infinite merit of forming a scheme infinitely better than any other being could have formed, is to be wholly ascribed to his boundless wisdom and benevolence. But to deny his eternal decrees is to rob him of all this glory, and to bring the highest reproach upon his character. Should one person be saved, whom he did not intend should be saved; should one person be lost, whom he did not intend should be lost; should one pain be endured, which he did not intend should be endured; should one sin be committed, which he did not intend should be committed; or, in a word, should one event finally take place, which he did not intend should take place; it would demonstrate the imperfection of his nature. And the least natural or moral imperfection in the Deity would divest him of all his glory, and render him an object unworthy of the trust and confidence of created beings. For, if God could, either intentionally or unintentionally, either cause or suffer any event to take place, detrimental to the highest good of the universe, no intelligent creature could have the least security of his happiness, or even of his existence. To deny, therefore, that God comprehended and determined all things that ever have existed, or ever shall exist, is to rob him of all his glory, to subvert the whole scheme of redemption, and to sap the foundation of all happiness in the universe. If there can be any fundamental error, it is the denial of the doctrine of the divine decrees.

3. If it was the supreme purpose of God, in concerting the work of redemption, to make the brightest display of himself, then the ministers of the gospel ought to exhibit all the doctrines contained in it, in the most plain and intelligible manner. It is the great design of preaching to unfold the glorious scheme of salvation. Paul viewed his office in this light, and made it his main object to unfold as fully as possible the whole plan of redemption. He says he meant "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." The gospel was wrapt up in types and figures for many ages; but when the vail of the temple was rent at the crucifixion of Christ, the shadows of the Mosaic dispensation vanished, and the mystery of the gospel

was clearly disclosed. And this mystery the apostle meant to explain so fully and clearly, that all who heard him preach, not only might, but must, understand the great scheme of redemption. In consequence of this, he could appeal to his hearers, that he had faithfully discharged his office: "Wherefore I take you to record, this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." He supposed, the more fully and clearly he preached all the doctrines of the gospel, the more fully and clearly the glory of God would be displayed. This opinion is founded in the very nature and design of the gospel. For if the whole scheme of salvation is calculated to display the glory of God, then every part of it, in its proper connection, must have a natural tendency to promote the same desirable purpose. It is, therefore, the most direct way to promote the glory of God, to preach every doctrine of the gospel as plainly as possible. If the whole scheme of the gospel was the best that could be devised; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he alone devised it. If it was necessary, in order to carry this scheme into execution, to introduce sin and misery into the moral system; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he designedly introduced these evils for this wise and benevolent purpose. If it was best that all moral beings should be placed in a state of trial, in which they might have an opportunity to establish or to lose their original rectitude; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he did designedly place them in such a critical and dangerous situation. If it was best that the first man should be the public head of his posterity; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he did suspend the moral character of the whole human race upon the conduct of Adam in paradise. If it was best that only a part of mankind should be saved; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he determined that only a part should be saved. If it was best that a part of mankind should be finally lost; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he determined a part should finally be lost. In a word, if it was best that the work of redemption should be accomplished; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he made all the means necessary to accomplish it absolutely certain, by his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is utterly impossible to believe that the gospel was devised on purpose to give intelligent creatures the most clear and just conceptions of God, and yet believe that the preaching of the gospel plainly, has a tendency to lead mankind into false conceptions of the divine character. The truth is, that preaching

the gospel partially never fails of leading hearers into error. They must form wrong ideas of God, and of the doctrines of the gospel, if the most important parts of the work of redemption are either concealed, or denied. If, therefore, ministers of the gospel wish to glorify God, if they wish to enlighten and convert sinners, if they wish to edify and comfort believers, if they wish to suppress dangerous errors, if they wish to check the progress of infidelity, and promote the great interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, let them declare the whole counsel of God, and unfold, as clearly and fully as possible, the great scheme of redemption. This is their indispensable duty, and in the faithful discharge of this duty they will find a great present satisfaction, and a great future reward.

4. If it be the great design of the work of redemption, to display the glory of God, then it is a peculiar privilege to be allowed to preach this everlasting gospel to a sinful and perishing world. The apostle Paul entertained a lively and grateful sense of the favor of God, in giving him this desirable employment: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." At another time, speaking of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to his trust, he breaks out in this grateful language: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." The ministerial office is a good office, and affords the best advantages to those who faithfully discharge it, to attain all that is worthy to be desired in the present life. It gives them a peculiar opportunity of acquiring the largest portion of divine knowledge. All good ministers have a high relish for divine knowledge, and desire to dive into the deep things of God, and to enlarge their minds with clear and extensive views of his character, his designs and works. Deep and critical researches in the great work of redemption, never fail to gratify this pure desire after pure knowledge. Studious and pious divines enter the widest field of mental improvement. They move in a higher sphere than mathematicians and astronomers, or natural and moral philosophers. These study the science of means; but divines soar to a higher region, and study the science of moral ends, which is the highest science in nature. The unsearchable riches of Christ afford materials for the most noble and agreeable discoveries. These are the objects which now employ the attention of principalities and powers in heavenly places, and will employ their attention, and the attention of all holy creatures, to endless ages. The ministers of the gospel may be considered as the lowest order in the highest school in the uni-

verse. The knowledge of all other arts and sciences shall fail; but the divine science which they are pursuing shall last for ever, and their progress in it shall be like the rising sun, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

But the improvement of the heart is more desirable than the improvement of the understanding; and the ministerial office is highly favorable to the growth of grace. While pious ministers are feeding their people with the sincere milk of the word, they enjoy the best opportunity of increasing their holiness, as well as knowledge. Divine truth has a direct tendency to nourish and strengthen every holy and benevolent affection. Hence our Saviour said to his Father, in his last prayer for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." While ministers are pursuing their proper business, their minds are sensibly employed about the most important truths and the most glorious and amiable objects. They are naturally led to contemplate God as forming the great scheme of redemption; as entering upon the execution of it, at the creation of angels and men; as pursuing it, in the course of providence, ever since to the present day; and as still carrying it on to the second coming of Christ; when all its glorious fruits and effects shall fully appear, and be perfectly enjoyed by all holy beings, without interruption and without end. While musing on such boundless and interesting scenes, they will feel the fire of devotion kindling in their breasts, and find their holy calling enlarging and comforting their holy hearts, and preparing them for the enjoyment of all the good which shall flow from the work of redemption.

These opportunities of growing in knowledge and in grace are mere personal advantages; but the ministerial office affords another, which is much more valuable and important, and that is, the opportunity of doing the greatest good that can be done by created agents. To ministers, in particular, is this grace given, that they should serve God in the gospel of his Son, and be employed as instruments in forming vessels of mercy, and qualifying them to be members of the church of the first born; who will be the most amiable creatures in the universe, and above all others serve to display the glory of God in the sight of principalities and powers in heavenly places. And what greater service can be done for God and man, than to fit immortal souls to display his glory, and enjoy his favor for ever?

Permit me now to apply this subject to the Pastor elect.

Dear Sir,— Let your heart rise in gratitude to God, who is about to grant you the great privilege of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. This is the most desirable work in which you can be engaged. It is to unfold the mystery

which has been hidden for ages from the greatest part of mankind, and which displays all the perfections of the Deity in the most amiable light. If I should tell you that precious and perishing souls were about to be committed to your care and instruction, I should remind you of a serious and pertinent truth. But this subject holds up to your view a greater and more solemn truth; that the glorious gospel is committed to your trust; in which not only you and your people, but God, and Christ, and all moral beings, will be for ever deeply interested. This trust, solemn and important as it is, we have too much reason to fear, has often been betrayed by those to whom it has been committed. And are you in no danger of betraying it? May you not conceal or corrupt those truths which you ought to explain and inculcate? And, instead of employing all your learning and ingenuity in unfolding the great scheme of redemption, may you not exert all your abilities to make men ignorant of the glorious gospel of the blessed God? But if you understand the gospel you will be able, and if you love the gospel you will be disposed, to keep the faith, amidst all the errors and delusions which may prevail through the land. You will not only teach the pure doctrines of the gospel, but contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. You will not forget that you are set for the defence of the gospel; and must be responsible to him whom you profess to serve, for the corruptions of Christianity which you either propagate, or do not endeavor, to the utmost of your power, to expose and restrain. If you preach the same gospel which Paul preached, and in the same manner, you may expect to find some will become your enemies, because you tell them the truth. But if you are faithful, you will find a sufficient shield and support in the gospel itself, which, in its final operation, will secure the interests of the universe, and your own interests among the rest. Seek first the kingdom of God, and you have the promise of Christ, that all things necessary shall be added. Go on your way rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, which shall be fully displayed by that gospel you preach. You have nothing to fear but unfaithfulness, which alone can rob you of your future and eternal reward. Only take heed to yourself, and to your doctrines, and you shall both save yourself and them that hear you, and be each other's joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

This Church and Congregation are about to receive a minister, from whom they have reason to expect a faithful discharge of his duty. And if he does plainly and faithfully unfold the great scheme of salvation, they will derive great good, or great evil, from his ministry. The gospel will make impressions on

their minds, which never can be erased, and which will prove a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death. Those who sit under the best preaching, are of all persons in the most hazardous situation. While the kingdom of God is brought nigh unto them from Sabbath to Sabbath, they must either enter in, or reject the counsel of God against themselves. But nothing can aggravate their guilt so fast, or raise it to so high a degree, as rejecting the counsel of God; because this is opposing the whole scheme of redemption, and all the designs and works of God, as well as all the good of the universe. How can those escape who neglect so great salvation? To oppose the gospel, is to rush on certain and awful destruction. So says the divine truth itself: "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

SERMON X.

DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL THE FOOD OF CHRISTIANS.

ORDINATION OF REV. EDWARD WHIPPLE, TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN CHARLTON, JAN. 25, 1804.

I HAVE fed you with milk and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. — 1 COR. iii. 2

THE apostle Paul, in passing through Greece, came to Corinth, where he found a Jewish synagogue, and in which he preached for several Sabbaths, endeavoring to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. But after they openly and violently opposed the gospel, he turned to the Gentiles, and preached among them a year and six months. During this time, he was so successful in his work as to gather a large and flourishing church. But after he left this happy society of christians, they fell into great animosities and contentions about the preachers and the doctrines of the gospel. To heal these difficulties, and reunite them in affection and sentiment, appears to be his principal design in this epistle. He addresses them on the subject of peace and harmony, with peculiar tenderness and pathos. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." And to convince them of the peculiar propriety of his giving them this exhortation, he afterwards observes, that he had endeavored to prevent all religious controversies among them by preaching no other than the most plain and profitable doctrines of the gospel. "I have fed you with milk and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." Truth

is the same to the mind, that food is to the body. Food nourishes and strengthens the body, and truth nourishes and strengthens the mind. There is a propriety, therefore, in the apostle's making use of milk and meat, which are different species of food, as metaphors to represent different sorts of truth, which he preached at different times, to those who were under different circumstances. By his feeding the Corinthians with milk instead of meat, we are to understand that he taught them such doctrines as were best adapted to their peculiar character and condition, instead of others which he might have taught them, but which they were then unable to receive and improve to their spiritual benefit. This is the plain and obvious sense of the text; which naturally leads us, on the present occasion, to inquire,

I. What doctrines the apostle did preach to the Corinthians.

II. Why he calls the doctrines, which he preached to the Corinthians, milk.

III. Why he preached these, rather than any other doctrines, to that people.

I. Let us inquire what doctrines the apostle did preach to the Corinthians.

In teaching any art or science, it is necessary to begin with its most essential and fundamental principles. The same mode of instruction seems proper, in preaching the gospel to those who never heard it. And since this was the case with the Corinthians, we may justly suppose that the apostle would adapt his preaching to their peculiar state, and, in the first place, teach them the nature and design of the gospel, which would necessarily lead him to unfold the great and leading doctrines of Christianity. This supposition we find confirmed by his own declarations. "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." And in another place he says, "According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation." These passages afford a strong presumptive evidence, that the apostle taught the most essential and fundamental doctrines of the gospel to the Corinthians. But we shall find more ample evidence of this, if we now examine the contents of his two epistles to that people.

The moral depravity of human nature lies at the foundation of the gospel. If all men were not involved in moral corruption and guilt, they would not need that salvation which the gospel reveals and offers. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." The apostle could not preach the gospel intelli-

gibly to the Corinthians, without teaching them the doctrine of moral depravity. Accordingly we find him bringing this doctrine into view, in order to illustrate the redeeming love of Christ. These are his words: "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." He means, dead in trespasses and sins, which is complete moral depravity. And in the chapter preceding the text, he describes the entire depravity of the heart, by its leading influence upon the understanding. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." These are plain instances of the apostle's teaching the Corinthians the total depravity of human nature.

This sentiment is intimately connected with that of the renovation of the heart by the special influence of the Divine Spirit. For if natural men are entirely destitute of holiness and wholly under the dominion of sin, then their hearts must be renewed before they can become heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Our Saviour says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The reason he assigns is, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." The necessity of regeneration arises entirely from the total corruption of the human heart. The apostle, therefore, having taught the Corinthians the doctrine of total depravity, equally taught them the doctrine of regeneration by the special operation of the Deity. "God," says he, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He exhibits the same sentiment in another form. "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God." By this expression he meant to teach the Corinthians that they could not be prepared for heaven, unless they were formed into the divine image, by the special operation of the Divine Spirit.

The immediate effect of regeneration is pure, disinterested love. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." The Spirit in his special operation upon the heart, conforms it to the moral image of God. God is love. Regeneration consists in shedding abroad the love of God in the heart, which was before entirely destitute of true benevolence. This holy love, which is the fruit of the Spirit, is the essence of all true religion. So the apostle taught the Corinthians, in the most plain and pointed language. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not

charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." And in farther describing the peculiar qualities of this holy love, he says, "Charity seeketh not her own." By this it appears, that he inculcated upon the Corinthians the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, as essentially different from every selfish affection, and as absolutely necessary to the performance of any thing, that is truly acceptable in the sight of God.

Saving faith naturally flows from love. We read "faith worketh by love," and "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Love to God produces love to Christ; and love to Christ is the very essence of that faith, which is connected with eternal life. Accordingly the apostle exhorted the Corinthians not only to become reconciled to God, but also immediately to embrace Jesus Christ, as the only ground of pardon and salvation. He speaks as though it were his principal object in preaching, to urge the immediate duty of saving faith. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." The grace of God here, as in many other places, means the gospel, which the apostle tenderly and solemnly urges the Corinthians immediately to embrace. For he closes his exhortation with these words. "Behold, now is the accepted time! behold, now is the day of salvation."

After men have become reconciled to God, and received Christ by faith, they still need the Spirit of promise to carry on a work of sanctification in their hearts. Sanctification is the same as continued regeneration; and the same divine influence, which at first reconciles the heart to God, is constantly necessary to keep it in a state of reconciliation. This sentiment the apostle taught the believers at Corinth. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." He does, indeed, represent believers as well as unbelievers as constantly dependent upon the divine agency, in all their internal exercises as well as external actions. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of our-

selves; but our sufficiency is of God." He could not have asserted the doctrine of divine agency in human actions in plainer or stronger terms.

The doctrine of the final perseverance of saints is an infallible consequence of the divine agency in their sanctification. If it be true that God does begin and carry on a work of grace in the hearts of all true believers, then they will certainly endure unto the end, and secure the salvation of their souls. Upon this ground, the apostle assures the Corinthian believers that they should eventually reach the kingdom of heaven. He says, "Now he who establisheth us with you in Christ, is God;—who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." He afterwards observes to the same persons, "We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "We are confident therefore, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Here it is evident that the apostle taught the Corinthians that all real saints shall persevere in holiness, and finally enjoy eternal life.

As God begins and carries on a good work in whom he pleases, so divine sovereignty is an essential doctrine of the gospel. This, therefore, is another sentiment which the apostle plainly preached to the Corinthians. He says in a few verses below the text, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." In the second epistle, he sets the amiable and awful sovereignty of God in a more striking light. "Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish." These expressions put it beyond a doubt, that the apostle preached the doctrine of divine sovereignty in its full latitude, and taught the Corinthians to believe that God has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and causes whom he will to perish.

The doctrine of personal election is a principal branch of divine sovereignty, which the apostle also taught the saints at Corinth. In this first epistle he addresses them as the chosen vessels of mercy: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty." "That according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

The apostle considered the doctrine of election, as having a happy tendency to give mankind high and becoming thoughts of God, and low and debasing thoughts of themselves; and therefore did not omit such a useful and practical subject in the course of his preaching. The doctrine of election naturally carries our thoughts back to the early days of eternity, when the glorious scheme of the gospel was concerted and adopted by the ever blessed Trinity. This plainly revealed, though in some respects profoundly mysterious doctrine, the apostle abundantly taught the Corinthians. He brings it into view at the beginning and end of both his epistles; but especially in his benediction at the close of the last. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." In this short and comprehensive sentence, the divinity, personality and equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are clearly and distinctly exhibited, and the practical use and importance of this great truth plainly taught.

Thus we find, from the two letters which the apostle wrote to the Corinthians, that he publicly and plainly taught them the doctrine of total depravity, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of disinterested love, the doctrine of saving faith, the doctrine of divine agency in human actions, the doctrine of the final perseverance of saints, the doctrine of divine sovereignty in the conversion of sinners, the doctrine of personal election to eternal life, and the doctrine of three equally divine persons in the only living and true God.

Let us now inquire,

II. Why he called these doctrines milk.

"I have fed you with milk, and not with meat." This certainly refers to the doctrines which he had preached to the Corinthians, and which have been ascertained under the preceding particular. And we find in his epistle to the Hebrews, that he used the same metaphor of milk, to represent those peculiar and essential doctrines of the gospel. "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." This passage throws light upon the metaphor in the text, and leads us to observe,

1. The doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians may properly be called milk, because they are easy to be understood.

Milk is much easier to digest than meat. Meat is for men, but milk is for babes. Those of the weakest constitution can bear this light and easy food. So the first principles of the oracles of God, are plain and level to the lowest capacity. It requires attention, rather than deep penetration, to understand the doctrines of grace which naturally arise from the mutual relation between God and his sinful creatures. Let men only realize that they are the creatures of God, that they have broken his laws, that they have incurred his displeasure, and that they are in his hands, as the clay is in the hands of the potter; and these very doctrines, which the apostle calls milk, will naturally occur to their minds, and be easily understood. It is very easy for any sinners, when they are constrained to look into their own hearts, to understand the doctrine of total depravity, the necessity of regeneration, the sovereignty of God in having mercy on whom he will have mercy, and all the other doctrines of the gospel which are inseparably connected with these. Even a youth, who has spent his whole time in vanity, as soon as he falls under conviction, feels that he is an enemy to God, that he deserves to perish, that God has a right to save or destroy him, and that he can have no ground of hope but in the doctrine of election, which assures him that God can and will save some. There are no truths in the Bible more level to every capacity, than the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which were designed to give saving knowledge to the weakest, meanest and vilest of mankind. Hence the apostle says to the Corinthians, in the beginning of this first epistle, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." And among that number he says there were "not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble." The common people heard and understood Christ's preaching, while the wise and learned called his doctrines hard sayings. The fundamental doctrines of the gospel approve themselves to the understanding and conscience of every person who will attend to them. Paul tells the Corinthians to whom he preached these doctrines, that he had, by manifestation of the truth, commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The Assembly of divines, who composed the Shorter Catechism, were men of superior knowledge and wisdom; and they supposed that the same doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians, were proper to be taught to children and youth, as well as to others of riper years, and better capacities. Indeed, it appears from the experience of ages, that all who are capable of knowing their guilty and perishing condition by nature, are equally capable of understanding the doctrines which Christ and the apostles preached. They are as easy to be understood by the

weakest mind, as milk is to be digested by the weakest stomach.

2. The apostle might properly call the doctrines which he preached to the Corinthians milk, because they are highly pleasing to the pious heart.

Milk is not only easy to the stomach, but agreeable to the palate. The scripture represents milk and honey as the richest dainties in nature. What is sweeter than honey, or what is more grateful to the taste than milk? So the doctrines of grace are delicious to those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. The apostle Peter represents all christians, "as new born babes" who "desire the sincere milk of the word." The sincere believers at Corinth admired the doctrines of grace, and were highly pleased with the apostle for preaching such precious truths, of which he reminds them in his second epistle. "We write none other things unto you than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; as also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus." All true saints have drunk into one spirit, and agree in relishing the pure doctrines of grace. They are never better pleased than while they hear the doctrines of total depravity, special grace, divine sovereignty, and disinterested love, clearly explained and illustrated. They are often so gratified under the preaching of these distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, that they naturally express their high satisfaction in the language of the text, and emphatically say, "We have been fed."

3. The doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians, may be properly called milk, because they are nourishing as well as pleasing, to the children of God.

It is the nature of milk to promote the health and growth of the human body; and it is equally the nature of divine truth to improve the heart as well as the understanding of true believers. The converts at Corinth made swift advances in knowledge and holiness, while they were fed and nourished by the doctrines according to godliness. This the apostle saw with pleasure, and gratefully acknowledged in his first epistle. "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God, which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance and in all knowledge;—so that ye come behind in no gift." The doctrines of grace, which are the first principles of Christianity, never fail to nourish, and strengthen, and purify the hearts of real christians. While they are fed by such precious truths, they will rapidly grow in love, in faith, in joy, and in every holy affection. But if they are denied this food, and fed only with dry, speculative, moral

truths, they will languish and decline in their Christian course. Nothing can keep alive holy affections in their hearts, but the exhibition of holy objects. The doctrines which most fully lay open the human heart, and most clearly display the divine character and designs, are the best suited to promote their edification and comfort. While they sit under such pure, evangelical preaching, they will taste the good word of God, feel the powers of the world to come; realize the glorious scenes of eternity; and find themselves daily preparing for that full blaze of light, which will break in upon their minds, when they shall be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. These observations may suffice to illustrate the propriety of the metaphor in the text; and to justify the apostle in saying that he had fed the Corinthians with milk, in preaching nothing but the most plain, the most agreeable, and the most edifying doctrines of the gospel.

We come now to the last thing proposed,

III. To inquire why the apostle preached to the Corinthians such plain and practical doctrines, rather than any others.

To this he gives a general answer in the text. "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." Here he declares that he meant to adapt his preaching to the peculiar state of the Corinthians. And if we consider their internal and external state, we shall easily perceive that both required the apostle to insist entirely upon the plain and primary doctrines of the gospel.

1. Their internal state required such plain preaching. They were Gentiles, who had never been favored with the knowledge of divine revelation. And though they had become celebrated for human learning, and had made great improvements in the arts and sciences, yet they were totally ignorant of the doctrines of the gospel. The apostle told them that it was the design of preaching, to teach them that which they had never discovered by the bare light of nature. "For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The minds of the Corinthians being in such a state of total darkness and ignorance, respecting God and divine things, it became the apostle to teach them, step by step, the primary truths of the gospel. He could not preach Jesus Christ and him crucified clearly and intelligibly to them, without unfolding the great scheme of redemption, which originated in the eternal purpose of God to sanctify and save sinners through the sufferings and death of the Son of his love. So that he was under a necessity of feeding them with milk, and not with meat, or of teaching

them only the plain and fundamental principles of Christianity, which their minds were able to bear.

2. Their external, as well as internal state required the same mode of preaching. Corinth was a place of learning and of learned men, who studied vain philosophy, and employed it as a weapon to destroy Christianity. The heathen philosophers were fond of maintaining their own religious opinions, in opposition to the pure truths of the gospel; and endeavored to persuade the followers of Christ to renounce their new religion, and return back to their former superstition and delusions. Nor were they altogether unsuccessful in their attempts to corrupt the professors of Christianity; for we are told that they did in fact overthrow the faith of some. Sensible of the dangerous situation of the believers at Corinth, the apostle labored to establish them in the Christian faith, and effectually guard them against those who lay in wait to deceive. On this account, he found it necessary to give them line upon line, and precept upon precept, and continually inculcate the most essential and fundamental doctrines of the gospel. These afford the strongest internal evidence of the truth and divinity of divine revelation; and carry greater conviction to the minds of common christians than prophecies or miracles, or any other mere external proofs of Christianity. By declaring the whole counsel of God, and clearly unfolding the nature, design, and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, the apostle took the best method to guard the believers at Corinth against the most plausible and subtile arguments of infidels. Those unlearned christians were able to understand the internal evidences of Christianity, but they had neither learning nor abilities to compare sacred and profane history, and to discern the connection between divine predictions and the events by which they were visibly fulfilled. Thus it appears, that both the internal and external state of the Corinthians required the apostle to preach only such plain and important doctrines, as were the best suited to establish them in the faith, and guard them against the enemies of the gospel.

It is now time to improve and apply the subject.

1. If the metaphor of milk has been properly explained, then we may easily conjecture what is to be understood by the metaphor of meat. If by milk the apostle means the more plain and important doctrines of the gospel, it seems to be natural to suppose that by meat he means some other sentiments less plain, and less necessary to be known by common christians. He was thoroughly acquainted with the higher as well as lower branches of Christianity. He was able to teach the dark and difficult, as well as the plain and easy doctrines of divine revelation. And though he has not told us in the text, nor any

where else, what were the dark and difficult points of doctrine, which he represents under the metaphor of meat, and which he did not think proper to preach to the people of Corinth, yet we may safely conclude that they were such as respected the following subjects.

First: The rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation. These he well understood, as appears by his epistle to the Hebrews, in which he clearly explains their true meaning and design. But we can hardly suppose that he would teach the men of Corinth these dark things, because they were not prepared to understand them. They had not enjoyed the Old Testament, which had a peculiar relation to the Jews, with whose customs, and manners, and modes of religion, they had been very little acquainted, and to which they were no longer required to conform. The apostle, therefore, might very properly pass over the Mosaic rites and ceremonies in his preaching to the Corinthians.

So he might, secondly, the types and predictions, in the Old Testament, respecting the character and coming of the promised Messiah. It would have been very difficult to explain these things intelligibly to a people who were destitute of the writings of Moses and the prophets. Nor was it very necessary, seeing Christ had actually come in the flesh, had suffered and died and rose from the dead, and had introduced the gospel dispensation. It is, however, easy to perceive that the types and prophecies concerning Christ, which the Jews in general did not understand, would have been strong meat to the Gentiles, who had never enjoyed their religious advantages. These subjects therefore, were among the number of those which the Corinthians could not bear, and which the apostle would not preach to such young converts to Christianity.

And to these may be added, thirdly, the predictions in the New Testament, concerning the great apostacy in the Christian church; the rise and fall of the Man of sin; the calling in of the Jews; the spread of the gospel in the millennium; and the state of things from that day to the end of the world. We know the apostle sometimes wrote and preached upon these high points, to which St. Peter alludes in his second epistle. "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you: As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." We will not now affirm that the subjects which we have mentioned were the only subjects which the apostle calls strong meat; but we will presume to say that all

the subjects which we have mentioned are more difficult to explain and comprehend, than the doctrines which he taught the Corinthians, and which he calls milk.

2. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that the doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians have been greatly misrepresented. He represents them as milk; but others represent them as meat. He represents them as easy to be understood; but others represent them as dark and mysterious. He represents them as agreeable to the pious heart; but others represent them as odious and detestable to every friend of piety and virtue. He represents them as enlightening and edifying to all true believers; but others represent them as discouraging and perplexing to the followers of Christ. There is reason to believe that these misrepresentations of the apostle's preaching have done a great deal of mischief in the Christian world. How many ministers have quoted his own words against himself; and employed the metaphors in the text to justify themselves, not only in neglecting to preach the doctrines which he preached to the Corinthians, but in opposing and stigmatizing those doctrines! And how many people have been strongly prejudiced against the doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians, by hearing them represented, by their public teachers, as meat, as strong meat, too strong for any christians in the world to bear! Can these dangerous misrepresentations be altogether owing to ignorance? Has it not been made to appear that Paul did preach to the Corinthians the doctrine of total depravity, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of disinterested love, the doctrine of divine agency in human actions, the doctrine of personal election to eternal life, and the doctrine of the sacred Trinity? And has it not been made to appear that Paul called these very doctrines milk, and not strong meat? What ground is there, then, to suppose that his words in the text are so generally misrepresented, through a misapprehension of their plain and obvious meaning? There is too much reason to fear that many who have really understood, have designedly misrepresented, the peculiar and important doctrines of the gospel, which Paul preached to the Corinthians, by calling them meat instead of milk. It is extremely natural for those who hate the pure doctrines of Christianity, either to misunderstand them or misrepresent them; but both the deceivers and deceived in this case, are highly criminal in the sight of God; and unless they receive and obey the truth, they must certainly perish.

3. This subject affords an infallible criterion, by which to determine who are the plainest preachers in point of sentiment. Paul tells us that he fed the Corinthians with milk, and not

with meat, while he preached the most essential and important doctrines of Christianity. Those therefore, who preach the same doctrines which Paul preached and called milk, are in reality the plainest preachers, and the easiest to be understood by every class of hearers. They are easier to be understood than those who preach upon the historical parts of scripture. They are easier to be understood than those who preach upon the prophetical parts of scripture. They are easier to be understood than those who preach upon the biographical parts of scripture. They are easier to be understood than those who preach upon the typical parts of scripture. And they are much easier to be understood than those who deliver sentiments in direct opposition to the doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians. There have always been some, ever since the days of the apostles, who have preached against the doctrines which he preached. Some have preached against one, some against another, and some against every doctrine which he preached. And it appears from the most authentic history of the church, that the preachers of this description were the first to introduce metaphysics and vain philosophy into the pulpit. The Socinians, Arians, Pelagians, and other sectaries, who early opposed the pure and simple doctrines which Christ and the apostles taught, were obliged to have recourse to logical, metaphysical and philosophical subtilties, in their own defence. And it is still the case, that those who preach against the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of divine agency, and the doctrine of total depravity, are constrained, either to renounce reasoning altogether, or else to reason in the most intricate, obscure, unintelligible manner. There never was, and there never can be, any false scheme of religion so easy to explain and understand, as that true scheme of religion which Paul taught the Corinthians. Those, therefore, who preach the very same doctrines which Paul preached, must be, of all others, the plainest preachers in point of sentiment. They preach agreeably to both scripture and reason; while all others have to oppose both scripture and reason, which must necessarily involve them in darkness and confusion. Upon this point we may properly appeal to common observation and experience. Go into the congregations who statedly hear those who teach doctrines different from, if not opposite to the doctrines which Paul preached, and will you find that such congregations better understand their minister's sentiments, or are better acquainted with any scheme of religion, than those congregations who sit under ministers who preach the same doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians? Hearers are proper judges of

plain preachers; and let the opinion of hearers be taken upon this point, and undoubtedly nine in ten will confidently say that they could never understand any preachers so easily and fully, as those who preached the very same doctrines which Paul preached, and called milk. These doctrines always were and always will be plain and intelligible to all classes of mankind; and it is only the objections, which are made to these plain and fundamental principles of Christianity, that are really dark and hard to be understood.

4. If the foregoing observations are just, then there is no reason to think that any people are unable to bear the doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians. Many preachers seem to imagine that their people are not able to bear the doctrine of total depravity, or the doctrine of regeneration, or the doctrine of election, or the doctrine of divine agency, or the doctrine of the Trinity; and for this reason, suppose it is a point of prudence to pass over these subjects in silence in their public discourses. But this is a great mistake. There is not a congregation in the world, who are unable to bear the doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians. Any people who are able to bear any preaching, are able to bear the pure, simple, essential doctrines of the gospel. These are milk, and not strong meat. These are the plainest doctrines which can be preached or heard. Though Paul knew that the Corinthians were not able to bear some divine truths, yet he knew that they were able to bear the doctrines which he actually preached. And it is absurd to suppose that there are any congregations at this day, who are not able to bear the same truths which the Corinthians were able to bear, who had enjoyed no other than the dim light of nature. The truth is, that people have always been unwilling, but not unable to bear the disagreeable truths of the gospel. The plainest truths are the most disagreeable to the depraved heart; and this is the real reason, why people complain that they cannot understand them. Their inability to bear the peculiar doctrines of Christ, lies in their heart, and not in their understanding. So Christ himself told his hearers, who complained of his hard sayings. "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word." Again he demanded, "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words. Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." The people at this day are just as able, and just as unwilling, to bear the plain and reproving doctrines of the gospel, as they were in Christ's and the apostle's day. There is no conceivable reason, therefore, why the ministers of the gospel should not preach precisely the same doctrines to every people, at this day, which Christ and the apostles preached in their day. But,

5. It appears from what has been said, that now is a proper time for ministers to feed their people with milk, and not with meat. Our churches and congregations, in general, are in a situation very similar to that of the Corinthians. Though they are increasing rapidly in human knowledge, yet they are declining fast in the knowledge of divine things, and need to be taught, again and again, the first principles of the oracles of God. It is a gross mistake, that people are generally well indoctrinated in religious sentiments. The truth is, notwithstanding all their religious advantages, they are generally very ignorant of the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of Christianity. This may be partly owing to the negligence of private and public instructers, but perhaps more to the dissipation and licentiousness which are every where spreading and prevailing. How many are there in all our congregations, who know nothing but the name of the Christian religion, and need to be taught the plainest doctrines of it! Besides, the land is full of deceivers, who are zealously engaged to subvert every principle of morality and religion, and to propagate Atheism, Deism, and every species of infidelity. It is the age of blind reason and vain philosophy. These engines are industriously employed to corrupt the sentiments and hearts of old and young, and to lead them into strong and fatal delusions. It highly concerns the ministers of Christ, at this day, to make a bold and firm stand against ignorance, infidelity and vice. And the peculiar weapons of their warfare, are the pure, primary and essential doctrines of the gospel. These weapons have been mighty to destroy the strong holds of the enemies of truth. And there is abundant reason to believe that if the preachers of the gospel would unitedly employ these weapons in defence of it, they would effectually check the rapid progress of destructive errors, and revive the sinking cause of Christ. It is impossible for any man in the world to understand the gospel and yet disbelieve it. If ministers, therefore, would universally preach so as to make their people really understand the gospel, there would not be a single person who could become an infidel. It now depends, under God, upon ministers, to save their people from the errors and destruction of this untoward generation, by feeding them with milk, and not with meat.

May these thoughts sink deeply into his heart, who is about to take the charge of the flock of Christ in this place.

Dear Sir, — If you have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, and have been fed with the sincere milk of the word, you will feed your people with knowledge and understanding. You will love to preach those precious truths to others, which you have found pleasing and profitable to yourself. You will believe that your people are able to bear the doctrines which

are the best adapted to awaken and convince sinners, and to quicken, comfort, and edify saints. You will believe that your people ought to be satisfied if you feed them with the same doctrines with which the apostle fed the Corinthians. You will believe that if they do complain of such doctrines, you ought to regard God rather than man, and preach the truth, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. It is true, you will feel the propriety and importance of prudence in preaching; but your prudence will consist, not in concealing the doctrines of grace, but in holding them up in the clearest, strongest and most consistent light. The gospel carries its own evidence with it; and, if you represent its peculiar doctrines in their proper order, harmony and connection, they will approve themselves to every man's conscience. Though all men naturally hate the doctrines of the cross, yet their reason and conscience are always on the side of divine truth. Address these powers and faculties of the soul, before you attempt to move the passions. Rightly divide the word of truth, and give to every one his portion in due season. Always aim to instruct your people upon every subject which you handle in public. But if you would instruct them, you must instruct yourself. Give yourself to reading, meditation and prayer. Study the Bible and your own heart; and you will be able, through the whole course of your ministry, to bring forth out of your treasury things new as well as old. In a word, remember that you watch for souls as one who must give account, and if you are only faithful to God and to your people, you will be a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.

Brethren and friends of this Church and Congregation — Permit me to ask you on this solemn and interesting occasion, whether you are as well united in the gospel, as you are in the man whom you have called to preach it? Do you desire to be fed with "the sincere milk of the word?" Are you willing to receive the same precious truths which the primitive Christians gladly received from the lips of the apostle? If these are your desires and feelings, there is a promising prospect before you. Your pastor will preach with pleasure, and you will hear with no less pleasure and delight. The more he unfolds the gospel, the better you will be pleased with his preaching; and instead of becoming his enemies, because he tells you the truth, you will sincerely and ardently love him for his work's sake. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." If you only receive the truth in love, your peace and harmony will increase, and the union between you and your pastor will strengthen, and you will be happily preparing to be each other's joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus." Amen.

SERMON XI.

PAUL'S METHOD OF PREACHING.

ORDINATION OF REV. STEPHEN CHAPIN, TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE CHURCH AND PEOPLE IN HILLSBOROUGH, JUNE 19, 1805.

TESTIFYING both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. — ACTS, xx. 21.

As THE apostle Paul was returning from Macedonia to Jerusalem, he came to Miletus, from whence he sent and called the elders of the church of Ephesus. When they had come together he delivered a discourse, which was directly calculated to assist and animate them in the work of the gospel ministry. And among other things he called their attention to his manner of preaching, while he formerly resided among them. "Ye know," says he, "how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." As these words were originally designed to administer instruction to the ministers of Christ, they naturally lead us, on the present occasion, to consider how the apostle Paul preached the gospel, and the propriety of his mode of preaching.

I. Let us consider how the apostle Paul preached the gospel. Though he sometimes preached to the Jews and sometimes to the Gentiles, and though he sometimes preached on one subject and sometimes on another, yet amidst all this variety, there was a certain uniformity in his preaching which deserves particular notice.

1. He always made a point of *explaining* the gospel. To

preach is to instruct; and to instruct on any subject, it is generally, if not always, necessary to explain it. Much of the force and perspicuity of preaching consists in explaining the gospel, and making men see the real design of God in the method he has taken to save sinful and perishing creatures. Here Jews and Gentiles, all men of all descriptions, stand in peculiar need of instruction. The apostle, therefore, determined to know nothing in his preaching save Jesus Christ and him crucified. He knew that it would be preposterous to call upon men to embrace the gospel, before he had explained it to them in a clear and intelligible manner. And it appears from the whole history of his ministerial labors, that he excelled all the other apostles, in unfolding the meaning, the harmony, and the connection of the first principles of Christianity. Just as he was about to take his final leave of those whom he addressed in the text, he called upon them to bear testimony to his fidelity in explaining to them the gospel of divine grace. "And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." To declare all the counsel of God is to explain the great plan of redemption, which was concerted before the foundation of the world, and which comprises all the designs and operations of the Deity. Hence the apostle viewed it a privilege, as well as a duty, to explain the gospel to all his hearers. In the third chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians he says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to his eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." By this declaration it appears that the apostle meant to explain the gospel so plainly and fully, that all his hearers might see God, and Christ, and angels, and saints, and sinners, and all created objects, in that relation and connection which they bear to each other in the work of redemption. Whether he preached to the Jews or to the Gentiles, to the learned or to the unlearned, he made it a primary object in his public discourses, to unfold the nature, design, and final consequences of the gospel, without the least ambiguity or reserve.

2. After he had explained the gospel to his hearers, he next

taught them what it was to embrace it. "He testified, both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance and faith both flow from pure, disinterested love, but are exercised towards different objects. In repentance, the sinner fixes his eye and his heart upon God, whose character he has hated, whose law he has broken, and whose displeasure he has incurred. He loathes and abhors himself for all his transgressions, accepts the punishment of his iniquity, and cordially approves of that justice which condemns him. In faith, the sinner fixes his eye and his heart upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and loves him for loving righteousness and hating iniquity; for condemning sin in the flesh; and for doing that, which renders it consistent with all the perfections of God, to pardon and save the penitent. This saving faith naturally follows repentance, but can never go before it; because love to Christ necessarily pre-supposes self abasement and self abhorrence for sin. Accordingly the apostle, after the example of Christ, places repentance before faith. This is the natural order of these two gracious affections, and they are always exercised in this order, by all who cordially embrace the gospel. And since he knew that none could derive any saving benefit from the gospel without complying with the terms of life, he did for this reason describe those gracious exercises of heart which are the essence of repentance and faith, and which are absolutely necessary to obtain pardon and acceptance with God, through the atonement of Christ.

3. The apostle made it his universal practice in preaching, not only to explain the gospel to his hearers, and teach them what it was to comply with it, but urged them to repent and believe *immediately.* He says in the text, that he testified "both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." As soon as he had taught sinners the nature, design, and terms of the gospel, he exhorted them to embrace it without the least delay. He concluded his discourse to the stupid and ignorant Athenians, with a solemn exhortation to repentance. He told them that God had winked at their former ignorance, but now commanded them to repent immediately. To the Corinthians he said, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." He held the same imperative language to the Ephesians. In addressing the sinner he said, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The apostle Paul not only instructed, but exhorted his hearers. He addressed not only the understandings, but the consciences of sinners. He always meant to fasten upon their

minds a sense of their immediate obligation to renounce their enmity to God, and become reconciled to him upon the terms of the gospel. Though he very well knew the moral weakness and impotence of sinners, arising from the native depravity of their hearts, yet he solemnly testified that it was their immediate and indispensable duty to exercise repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. This was his constant, uniform practice in preaching the gospel to those who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Let us now consider,

II. The propriety of the apostle's urging sinners to embrace the gospel immediately. He undoubtedly saw the propriety of this mode of preaching, and perhaps we shall all see the propriety of it, if we candidly and impartially attend to what may be offered in favor of his exhorting the impenitent and unbelieving to an immediate compliance with the gospel.

1. There was a propriety in the apostle's mode of preaching, because sinners are capable of embracing the gospel as soon as they understand it. They possess all the powers and faculties which are necessary to constitute them free, moral agents. They are capable of knowing God and hating him, and of knowing Christ and hating him. Hence says our Saviour to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Though the moral depravity of sinners has weakened their intellectual powers, yet it has by no means destroyed them. All their moral corruption lies in the heart, and consists in loving themselves supremely; and though this selfishness disposes them to say unto God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," yet when their attention is awakened, they are capable of seeing the perfections of God displayed in his works, and of understanding his will revealed in his word. They have, therefore, precisely the same natural capacity to embrace the gospel as to understand it. And upon this ground the apostle did, with great propriety, testify "both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Though Jews and Gentiles were all under sin, yet they were all capable of loving God and believing in Christ, as soon as the apostle had explained the gospel, and plainly taught them the terms of salvation. At the same moment that he conveyed the true knowledge of the gospel to their understanding, they felt a conviction in their own minds of the propriety of his exhorting them to believe it immediately. This warranted him to say, that by manifestation of the truth, he had commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The bare knowledge of truth always creates an immediate obligation to feel and act

agreeably to it. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." All men act upon this principle in their common conduct. The legislator first instructs, and then commands the subject. The officer first instructs, and then commands the soldier. The parent first instructs, and then commands the child. The master first instructs, and then commands the servant. After any person has instructed another in duty, there is a propriety in his exhorting him to an immediate compliance. This holds in regard to religious instruction, as well as to any other. There was, therefore, a plain propriety in the apostle's calling upon all to whom he preached the truth, to receive it in love immediately.

2. Paul preached agreeably to the directions which Christ had, from time to time, given to his ministers. Mark tells us that when Christ called the twelve apostles, and sent them forth by two and two to preach the gospel, he said unto them, "In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence shake off the dust under your feet, for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. And they went out, and preached that men should repent." By this commission Christ authorized the twelve apostles to call upon sinners to repent and believe the gospel the very first time they heard it, upon pain of their future and aggravated destruction. Soon after this, Christ gave a commission, of precisely the same import, to seventy more, whom he sent forth to preach the gospel in his name. And just before his ascension to heaven, he gave a general commission to his apostles and to all their successors in the gospel ministry to the end of time, in these memorable words: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." These repeated directions of the great Head of the church laid the apostle under indispensable obligation to testify both to the Jews and Gentiles, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a part of his ministerial duty, to urge sinners to give an immediate and cordial reception to the gospel, which he preached by divine authority. He would have been unfaithful to Christ and to the souls of men, if he had neglected to warn sinners to flee immediately from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life. He had no warrant from Christ to preach the gospel, without inculcating the immediate duty of repentance and faith. There is no more room, therefore, to call in question the propriety of his mode of

preaching, than to call in question the propriety of his obeying that divine authority by which he preached.

3. The example of all the sacred instructers who went before the apostle Paul, illustrates and confirms the propriety of his mode of preaching. He addressed sinners in the same manner in which the ancient prophets addressed them. They called upon the disobedient and rebellious to repent and return to God immediately. Let us attentively consider their mode of addressing sinners.

Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, having, in the first chapter of his prophecy, described the ingratitude and stupidity of the openly vicious and profligate, exhorts them to immediate repentance and reformation. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." Similar to this is his exhortation in the fifty-fifth chapter. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

The prophet Jeremiah was commanded to address the backsliders in Israel in this pointed language, "Return, ye backsliding children, saith the Lord." "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart." Here sinners are solemnly exhorted to change their hearts, and return to God immediately.

The prophet Ezekiel exhorted those who were pining away in their iniquity, to change their hearts as well as their lives, as the only way to escape eternal death. "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

The prophet Joel called upon sinners in a time of danger and distress, to return unto the Lord with all their hearts, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and to rend their hearts and not their garments.

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ and the greatest of all the prophets, urged sinners to repent immediately, and believe in him who was to come. We read, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "And when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

Our Saviour, who soon succeeded his forerunner as a preacher, exhorted sinners, as one having authority, to repent and believe the gospel immediately. This appears from the account which Mark gives of his public ministry. "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel." This was his usual mode of addressing sinners in his public and private discourses. As "he was walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him." He required all whom he called to follow him, to obey his call without the least delay. When one begged time to go and bury his father, he gave him this short negative answer: "Let the dead bury their dead." And when another desired leave to bid his friends farewell, he refused to grant his request. In his sermon on the mount, he exhorted sinners to change their hearts, and immediately become holy and benevolent as their Father in heaven. And he severely condemned the Scribes and Pharisees, who taught a different doctrine. "Wo unto you!—for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides,—ye make clean the outside of the cup, and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

Such was Christ's mode of preaching; which his first apostles uniformly followed. While Peter was preaching to the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and unto the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter gave them the only proper direction in their solemn situation. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." The next public discourse which he delivered to the people who saw him cure the lame man at the gate of the temple, he concluded with this exhortation: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." And when he saw Simon the sorcerer in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, he paid no regard

to his moral impotence, but with great solemnity, said, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps," or rather, so that, "the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." James, another apostle, followed the example and direction of Christ, in preaching the gospel to sinners, and urged them to immediate repentance, humiliation and submission. "Submit yourselves to God." "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

We have now said enough, and perhaps more than enough, to convince every candid mind that the prophets, John the Baptist, Christ, and his first apostles, preached to sinners in precisely the same manner; and uniformly exhorted them to immediate repentance and reconciliation to God. The plain and natural conclusion is, that there was a perfect propriety in the apostle Paul's mode of preaching. He stands completely justified, by the voice of reason, by the best examples, and by the highest authority, in "testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

This subject now suggests some things of serious importance to those who preach, and to those who hear the gospel.

1. If there was a propriety in the apostle's mode of preaching, then all his successors in the ministry should follow his example, in explaining the gospel as clearly as possible to their hearers. He did not preach merely about the gospel, or merely agreeably to the gospel; but he preached the gospel itself. He laid open the gospel scheme of salvation, in all its branches, from its first rise in the divine mind to its final consummation. He shunned not to declare all the counsel of God, but took every opportunity in public and private, to teach the Jews and Gentiles the essential doctrines of the gospel, in the most plain and profitable manner. He supposed that the Jews, notwithstanding they had the oracles of God in their hands, stood in need of being instructed in the knowledge of the gospel, as well as the Gentiles, who had been destitute of divine revelation. And viewing all his hearers in this light, he meant to explain the gospel so plainly and fully, that both the learned and unlearned might understand it. In this important part of preaching, he has set an example which is still worthy of universal imitation. But ministers, at this day, are extremely apt to imagine that their hearers are sufficiently acquainted with the peculiar doctrines of the gospel; and, for this reason, often neglect to explain

them. This is a very great defect in the present mode of preaching, and a very great departure from the apostolic practice. The deplorable consequence is, that multitudes, in a gospel land, live and die totally unacquainted with the first principles of the oracles of God. It is not enough for the professed ministers of Christ and successors of the apostle, to preach merely about the gospel, and about its leading sentiments, and only inculcate some of its moral duties; they ought to spend more time, and take more care to preach the pure gospel itself, and make men understand it, in its true import and extensive meaning.

2. If there was a propriety in the apostle's exhorting sinners to embrace the gospel immediately; then the gospel itself is perfectly consistent with his mode of preaching. The apostle had a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the gospel, and was able to explain all its doctrines according to truth. He could not have declared all the counsel of God, unless he had really understood the whole scheme of redemption. But he did declare all the counsel of God; and after he had explained the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, he urged both Jews and Gentiles to embrace them immediately with all their hearts. He saw, and he made sinners see, that all the doctrines of the gospel were entirely consistent with his urging them to repent and believe immediately.

In particular, he saw that the true doctrine concerning the extent of Christ's atonement, was consistent with his mode of preaching. Some have supposed that Christ did not make atonement for all mankind, but only for the elect; and, upon this ground, have supposed there is no propriety in calling upon sinners in general to embrace the gospel. It is true, this inference fairly follows from the false notion of particular redemption. But the apostle, who better understood the extent of Christ's atonement, represented it as extending to the whole human race. He taught that Christ "tasted death for every man." He taught that he died for all, "that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." He taught that he died for some who shall finally perish. In a word, he believed and taught the universal extent of Christ's atonement for sinners; and in this view of it, he saw it to be consistent with his calling upon all men every where to repent and believe the gospel, upon the very first offer of salvation.

He farther saw that the true doctrine concerning the total depravity of sinners, was consistent with his mode of preaching. Some suppose that total depravity consists in the mere want of a good taste, or a good disposition, or a holy principle. And some suppose that total depravity consists in a positive bad taste,

or bad disposition, or sinful principle. But whether it consists in a want of a good principle, or in a positive bad principle, they suppose that while sinners are really under the dominion of total depravity, there is no propriety in calling upon them to repent and believe the gospel, because they are under a natural inability to exercise repentance and faith. Here it must be allowed, that if the total depravity of sinners does consist either in the want of a good principle, or in a positive bad principle, they are really under a natural inability to repent and believe the gospel; and, so long as this natural inability remains, there is no propriety at all in urging them to exercise repentance, or faith, or love, or any other gracious affection. But the apostle had a very different idea of the moral depravity of sinners. He supposed it consisted neither in a want of a good principle, nor in a positive bad principle; but altogether in free, voluntary exercises of self love. Accordingly, he represented them as being "lovers of their own selves," and as having a carnal mind, which was enmity against God. And in this view of the total depravity of sinners, he saw a perfect propriety in calling upon them to hate sin, to love holiness, and heartily embrace the gospel.

Add to this, he saw that the true doctrine concerning regeneration, was consistent with his mode of preaching. All men form their idea of regeneration according to their idea of total depravity. Those who suppose that total depravity consists either in a want of a good principle, or in a positive bad principle, of consequence suppose that regeneration consists in the implantation of a new holy principle, in which the subject is wholly passive. They consider regeneration as a physical rather than a moral change; and suppose that when sinners are regenerated by the divine Spirit, they have a new holy principle given them, which is prior to, and the foundation of, all their future exercises of holiness. Hence they naturally conclude that sinners are totally passive in regeneration; and that previously to their receiving a new principle of holiness, they are under the same kind of inability to exercise any holy affection, that a blind man is to see, or a deaf man to hear, or a dead man to move. And upon this ground, they deny the propriety of urging sinners to immediate repentance and faith. But though the apostle believed the total depravity of sinners, and the special influence of the Spirit in changing their hearts, yet he had no idea that they were passive in regeneration, or that this saving change consisted in the implantation of a holy or gracious principle. He represented God as renewing sinners, by shedding abroad his love in their hearts; or by working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He represented the fruit

of the Spirit to be love, not the principle of love; to be joy, not the principle of joy; to be faith, not the principle of faith. He represented sinners to be active, and not passive, while under the renewing, as well as sanctifying influence of the divine Spirit. Hence he clearly discerned the propriety of his urging sinners to awake and arise from spiritual death, to put off the old man and put on the new, and immediately walk in newness of life.

Now, if neither the true doctrine concerning the extent of Christ's atonement, nor the true doctrine concerning total depravity, nor the true doctrine concerning regeneration, was inconsistent with the apostle's mode of preaching; can we conceive of any other true doctrine of the gospel, that is inconsistent with urging sinners to repent and believe immediately? The propriety of the apostle's mode of preaching demonstrates that there is not a single doctrine concerning God, or concerning Christ, or concerning the divine Spirit, or concerning the human heart, that is contained in the gospel of Christ, which is inconsistent with exhorting sinners to embrace the Saviour as soon as they know his character.

3. If there was a propriety in the apostle's urging sinners to embrace the gospel immediately, then all his successors in the ministry ought to follow his example in this important respect. No good reason can be assigned for departing from the apostolic mode of preaching. Paul derived his authority to preach the gospel, from the commission of Christ; and his successors derive their authority to preach the gospel from the same commission. Paul preached the gospel, to those who were dead in trespasses and sins; and his successors have to preach it to persons of the same character. Paul preached the gospel agreeably to the example of the prophets, of John the Baptist, of Christ, and of the other apostles who had gone before him in the ministry; and his successors are bound to follow the example of the same inspired preachers. All the ministers of the gospel, therefore, are under every possible obligation to adhere strictly to the apostolic mode of preaching. If they search the scriptures through, if they examine human nature ever so much, and if they compare all the doctrines of the gospel together, they cannot discover a single reason why they should deviate from the practice of the prophets, of Christ, and of the apostles. All these preachers urged sinners to turn from sin to holiness, to repent of all their transgressions, and immediately become reconciled to God in the way he has appointed. And this is still the only proper way of preaching the gospel to sinners; who are capable of understanding and embracing it, notwithstanding their total opposition to the terms of life. It is easy for ministers to

preach the gospel to sinners, while they follow the apostle's mode of preaching; but as soon as they depart from it, they find themselves plunged in darkness and difficulty. They know not what to say to the enemies of God, while they neglect to urge them to become reconciled to him. They feel the absurdity of exhorting them to remain impenitent, unbelieving and rebellious; but they must do this, either directly or indirectly, while they neglect to urge them to embrace the gospel. Hence arises the question which is so much agitated at this day among the preachers of the gospel, What must they say to sinners — what duties must they urge upon them — what directions must they give them? Few ministers find any difficulty in preaching to saints, who love God and cordially embrace the gospel; but many seem to be at a loss how to preach to sinners, who hate God and every duty which he has required in his word. But if they would adopt the apostolic mode of preaching, they would find it as easy to preach to sinners as to saints. Paul knew how to preach to sinners of all characters and conditions. He testified to them "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And let his successors in the ministry only follow his example, and all their difficulties and disputes about the proper mode of addressing sinners will entirely cease.

4. If there was a propriety in the apostle's mode of preaching, then there is no propriety in blaming ministers for conforming to it. They ought to take him for their guide in preaching, and endeavor to explain and enforce the gospel in the same manner that he did. But those who hate God are always disposed to complain of his ambassadors for calling upon them to love him. For this, they complained of the prophets. For this, they complained of John the Baptist. For this, they complained of Christ. And for this, they often complained of the apostles. Many became enemies to Paul, for calling upon them to repent and believe the gospel. Nor has the offence of the cross yet ceased. People in general are still disposed to complain of ministers for preaching exactly as the apostle preached; that is, for urging them to repent and believe the gospel immediately. They wish to be indulged in the neglect of this duty; and to be directed to something which they can do, while they retain all the depravity of their hearts. If ministers will depart from the apostolic mode of preaching, and inculcate only morality, and the mere external duties of reading and praying, seeking and striving, they will highly applaud them. But if ministers plainly testify repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, and condemn all the doings of sinners previously to their turning from sin to holiness, multitudes will murmur and complain of them, and absurdly say, that they urge no duty upon

sinners. Many seem to imagine that if sinners are exhorted to no duty previously to embracing the gospel, they are exhorted to no duty at all; and, upon this ground, they complain of those preachers who do not exhort sinners to any duty prior to repentance and faith. But they ought to consider that, by blaming such preachers, they reproach the prophets, Christ, and all the apostles; who exhorted sinners to nothing short of true repentance and a cordial reconciliation to God, upon the terms of the gospel. Let people only read the commission which Christ gave to his ministers, and examine the practice of all the inspired teachers, and they will find themselves fighting against the whole Bible, while they are condemning ministers for obeying the authority of Christ, and following the example of all the teachers immediately sent from God. But,

5. It clearly appears from all that has been said in this discourse, that ministers are justly to be blamed, if they neglect to follow the apostolic mode of preaching. This neglect must be owing either to a misunderstanding of the gospel, or to a desire to please man rather than Christ. Some may undoubtedly neglect to urge sinners to an immediate compliance with the gospel, because they really believe that sinners are totally unable to receive the truth in love. But this must be owing to their misunderstanding the gospel, which they mean to preach. If they really understood the gospel as the apostle Paul understood it, they would see it to be entirely consistent with their urging sinners to embrace it immediately, upon pain of everlasting destruction. They would see the propriety of preaching to sinners, as Christ directed all his ministers to preach, in his last commission to them. And they would not hesitate to say to every sinner, after they had explained the gospel to him, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." But if any are so ignorant of the gospel as not to see the propriety of preaching it in this manner, they are certainly to be blamed for not properly searching and understanding the scriptures, which clearly reveal the gospel of the grace of God. Though their ignorance may extenuate, yet it cannot extinguish their criminality in neglecting to exhort sinners to do their first and most important duty.

But there is no excuse for those who understand the gospel, and yet neglect to urge sinners to an immediate compliance with it. They can have no other motive for their neglect, but to avoid the censure and secure the applause of their hearers. They choose to please men, rather than to be the servants of Christ. It is absolutely certain, however, that they will finally fail of obtaining their end. For God will blame them, Christ will blame them, the prophets and apostles will blame them, awakened sinners will blame them, and their own

consciences will condemn them, for their criminal neglect. Their criminality will be in some proportion to the fatal tendency of their anti-scriptural and anti-apostolical mode of preaching. It is calculated to justify, stupify and destroy sinners. The neglecting to urge sinners to repent and believe immediately, is practically saying that they have a right, in the sight of God, to remain impenitent and unbelieving. It is really justifying them in all their selfishness of heart, and total opposition to the whole scheme of redemption. And to justify them in their state of alienation from God is to stupify and harden their hearts, and make them feel safe, while they are every day exposed to be cut down in their sins, and put beyond the reach of divine mercy. There is nothing more hardening and destructive to sinners, than accommodating the gospel itself to their corrupt hearts. The preaching that does this, is far more dangerous than no preaching at all. It is directly calculated to justify, stupify and destroy precious and immortal souls. The true design of preaching the gospel to sinners, is, to make them realize their guilt, their danger, and their duty. But neglecting to urge them to immediate repentance and faith, directly tends to stifle all sense of guilt, of danger, and of duty, in their minds; and make them settle down on their lees, and say in their hearts, "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." Thousands are at this day, undoubtedly, experiencing those stupifying effects of unfaithful preaching. How aggravated then must be the guilt of those ministers, who knowingly disobey the authority of Christ, disregard his example, and pervert his gospel to the eternal destruction of the precious souls, for whom he suffered and died on the cross!

The discourse now turns to the Pastor elect, for whom it is more especially designed.

You are, my young friend, about to enter upon the work of the gospel ministry, which will be highly interesting both to yourself and to those committed to your pastoral charge. It will be one principal branch of your ministerial duty, to preach the gospel to sinners. And you ought to esteem it a peculiar favor, that so many prophets and apostles, as well as Christ himself, have gone before you, and set you a perfect example of evangelical preaching. If you neglect to follow these infallible guides, it must be owing entirely to your seeking to please men rather than God. To this powerful temptation you will most certainly be exposed. It is a day of deep declension, in which the true apostolic mode of preaching the gospel has become, in many places, very unfashionable and very unpopular.

If you preach the same truths that Paul preached, and urge them in the same manner, you may expect that they will awaken the displeasure, if not the opposition of some of your

hearers. It concerns you, to gird up the loins of your mind, and sincerely resolve to testify repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, in all your public discourses. And here, perhaps, you will keep your resolution. But you will have occasion to preach to sinners in private, and from house to house. And here your resolution will be put to a severer trial. You will be in peculiar danger of departing from the apostle's example, and of contradicting your public discourses, by directing awakened sinners to do something short of immediate repentance and faith. They will tell you that they cannot change their own hearts, that faith is the gift of God, that it is absurd to require them to repent and believe immediately. They will anxiously desire you to lower the terms of the gospel to their impotence, and tell them what to do in order to get a new heart, and become true penitents. To answer their questions, and to silence their objections against an immediate compliance with the gospel, will require the exercise of all your wisdom and integrity. But you will always bear it in mind, that you have the Bible and their own consciences on the side of truth, and nothing to combat but their selfish and partial feelings. Be not afraid, therefore, to tell them the truth, and the whole truth, respecting the gospel and the plague of their own hearts. Show them that all their excuses for impenitence and unbelief flow from enmity to God, and reflect dishonor upon his character and all his overtures of mercy. Though this mode of treating them may make them, like the young man in the gospel, go away sorrowful, yet if ever they become reconciled to God, they will thank you for your plainness and fidelity. Never give any directions to sinners which they may comply with, and yet remain impenitent; but so preach to them in public, and so converse with them in private, that if they understand and love your instructions, they shall certainly be saved. Be a faithful minister of Christ, and you may depend upon his promised presence and assistance, which will enable you to perform every ministerial duty, and endure every ministerial trial. "Take heed unto yourself, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost may make you an overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Declare unto your people all the counsel of God, with a tender and compassionate concern for their future and everlasting good; and then you may, in the close of your ministry, whether it shall be longer or shorter, call upon them to testify this consoling truth in your favor, that you are "pure from the blood of all men." May you and your people prepare for such a happy parting, that you may have a more joyful meeting beyond the grave, and be each other's joy and crown of rejoicing in the kingdom of glory. Amen.

SERMON XII.

RELIGIOUS RESOLUTION.

PREACHED BEFORE THE MASSACHUSETTS MISSIONARY SOCIETY, MAY 27, 1800.

Be strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded. — 2 Chron. xv. 7.

There was such a peculiar and intimate connection between the civil and religious institutions in the Hebrew republic, that the cause of religion was necessarily and deeply affected, by both the good and bad administration of government. Hence it became a proverb in Israel, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Religion never failed to flourish under the smiles and patronage of wise and pious princes; nor, on the other hand, did it ever fail to languish and decay under the frowns and opposition of unwise and wicked rulers. This in some measure appeared, while the whole house of Israel were happily united in one civil as well as religious community; but it still more clearly appeared, after the revolt and apostacy of the ten tribes. In the days of Joshua, "Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase;" but after his decease, and while there was no king in Israel, the cause of religion visibly decayed, and never revived until the days of David and Solomon. While they were in the administration of government, they made noble and successful exertions to promote the public worship of God, and diffuse a spirit of vital piety among all classes of people. But after Rehoboam the son of Solomon, and Jeroboam the son of Nebat, divided the nation, religion received a most fatal blow. In

the kingdom of Israel it was greatly corrupted, and in the kingdom of Judah it was generally neglected. Rehoboam and Abijah were both unfriendly to the cause of God, and did much to obstruct and retard its progress. Accordingly, when Asa ascended the throne of Judah, he found religion in a low and languishing state. Iniquity had long abounded, and the love of many had waxen cold. But this deep declension, instead of weakening, awakened his holy zeal, to revive the sinking cause which lay so near his pious heart. His first sincere and vigorous efforts in favor of religion, were highly pleasing to the God of Israel, who sent a prophet on purpose to strengthen his resolution and perseverance in accomplishing the good design which he had so nobly conceived, and so successfully pursued. This is the agreeable account which the sacred historian gives, of some of the first acts of his pious and prosperous reign: "So Abijah slept with his fathers, — and Asa his son reigned in his stead. And he did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God; for he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and broke down the images, and cut down the groves; and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment." After he had proceeded so far, "The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded; and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; the Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." "Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded." This seasonable message from the God of Israel, gave new life and vigor to Asa and all his pious subjects. For it is added, "And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage." "And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon; for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him." In this connection, the words of our text naturally suggest this animating truth to our present consideration:

That the friends of God have good ground for unshaken resolution in promoting the cause of religion.

To set this subject in a proper light, I shall endeavor to show,

I. That resolution is necessary in promoting the cause of religion.

II. That the friends of God have good ground to be bold and zealous in promoting such a noble and important design.

I. Let us consider the necessity of resolution in promoting the cause of religion.

Resolution is the essence of that mental strength, which gives energy to all the powers and faculties of body and mind. It is composed of love, zeal and confidence, which are the most operative affections of the human heart. When a man has conceived a design which engages his supreme affection, which engrosses his whole attention, and which he firmly believes he is capable of executing, he then feels a strong resolution to call forth all his latent powers into vigorous exercise, to accomplish the object of his wishes. Such resolution has always had a principal influence in effecting all the great things which have ever been effected by the men of the world. Equal resolution, though of a different kind, is no less necessary in promoting the cause of religion, than in promoting any other great and difficult undertaking. Men of piety may have time, and opportunity, and learning, and wealth, and power, and influence, to promote the cause of truth, and yet never exert themselves in this great and good design, unless they possess a firm and unshaken resolution. But all good men, who have this noble quality, are properly prepared to espouse the cause of God, amidst a frowning world. Hence the inspired writers unitedly inculcate resolution as the principal thing necessary, in order to succeed in promoting the interests of religion. "Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak," says the prophet to Asa and the men of Judah, who were engaged in this pious and important work. When Jehoshaphat visited his kingdom, and discovered the prevalence of vice and irreligion, he exhorted the proper reformers to be bold and zealous in the discharge of their difficult duty. "Behold," says he, "Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord; also the Levites shall be officers before you." But notwithstanding all this aid and protection, he adds, "Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good." When Shecaniah, a bold and zealous friend of God, urged Ezra the priest to espouse the sinking cause of virtue and piety, for which he had been fervently praying, he plainly intimated that resolution was indispensably necessary to effect a religious reformation. "Arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee; we also will be with thee; be of good courage, and do it."

If we now turn our attention to those whom God has employed as eminent instruments of building up his kingdom, we shall find that a bold and persevering spirit was the most prominent trait in their character. Though Moses was a man of meekness, yet he was no less a man of firmness and resolu-

tion. He feared not the wrath of the king, nor the frowns of his court, nor the murmurs of the false and faint hearted Israelites; but boldly pursued the cause of God, in defiance to the united opposition of all the enemies of the church. Elijah displayed peculiar courage and zeal in appearing on the Lord's side and espousing his cause, at a time of general, and, as he thought, of universal declension. He not only opposed and confounded all the prophets of Baal, but even dared to deliver the message of God to Ahab, whom he knew had been seeking his life. It was a firm and unshaken resolution, which enabled Nehemiah to carry on and accomplish the work of God at Jerusalem, in opposition to all the intrigues and threats of Sanballat and Tobiah, and their numerous confederates. For, being admonished to consult his personal safety, he nobly replied, "Should such a man as I flee?" What invincible firmness did Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego discover, when they maintained the worship and glory of the only true God, before the mouth of the lions' den, and the flames of the burning fiery furnace? A bold and undaunted spirit was the most striking lineament in the character of John the Baptist, who was sent as a pioneer, to prepare the way of the Lord. The meek and lowly Jesus himself was "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." He spake with a courage and boldness with which never man spake. His undaunted resolution in purging the temple, surprised even his disciples, until they recollected it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." The holy apostles imbibed the bold and zealous spirit of their divine Master, which rendered them superior to all opposition, in spreading the gospel among both Jews and Gentiles. This the enemies of truth most sensibly felt, and most explicitly acknowledged. For we are told, "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." And when these two apostles were arrested in their work they bid defiance to the threats of their malignant opposers, and made this solemn appeal to their consciences: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Paul, that chosen vessel to bear the messages of grace to those sitting in the region of the shadow of death, was a man of astonishing resolution and zeal. He dared the dangers of the sea, and the perils of the wilderness. He attacked the false religion and vain philosophy of pagan priests and moralists. He regarded not the terror of tyrants, nor the rage and violence of persecutors; but boldly declared the whole counsel of God. And though his friends frequently advised him to

avoid the dangers and evils to which he exposed himself in the cause of Christ, yet his persevering zeal and resolution would not suffer him to desert nor neglect the benevolent design which he had determined, at all hazards, to pursue. Hear his bold and undaunted language: "Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Luther was raised up to purge away the errors and delusions of the Church of Rome, and to spread the pure truths of the gospel through many of the states and kingdoms of Europe. This was a most arduous and dangerous task. Accordingly, to fit him for his work, God inspired him with a bold, enterprising, unconquerable spirit. This animated and supported him amidst the greatest labors and contests that have ever, perhaps, fallen to the lot of any individual since the days of the apostles. As Calvin stood next to Luther in propagating truth in opposition to error, so next to that great reformer, he possessed the largest share of genuine resolution and fortitude. But though Zuinglius was a man of more penetration and knowledge, and commanded a more elegant and persuasive pen than either Luther or Calvin, yet, by his great timidity and irresolution, he often injured the glorious cause which he sincerely wished to promote. Thus it appears from the experience of ages, as well as from the testimony of scripture, that a pious and persevering resolution is indispensably necessary, in order to propagate the gospel, and build up the kingdom of Christ in the world. I now proceed to show,

II. That the friends of God have good ground for such unshaken resolution, in promoting such a great and good design. The precept in the text is connected with an animating promise. "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded." Here I shall mention a few of the weighty motives to bold and vigorous exertions in the cause of religion.

1. The friends of God have often been succeeded in their sincere attempts to promote his glory in the conversion of sinners. He has been pleased to allow them the privilege of being workers together with him, in strengthening and enlarging his spiritual kingdom. This privilege they have sometimes zealously improved, when they saw religion was declining, and multitudes of sinners were perishing in their sins. At such a time, Asa set himself to revive the sinking cause of God. He

first prepared the way, by removing the obstacles which stood opposed to his pious design, and then used the proper means to awaken the attention of his subjects to the things which belonged to their everlasting peace. In this arduous work he persisted for years, and happily succeeded in attaining the object of his desires, his prayers and exertions. His son Jehoshaphat followed his good example, and carried on the work which his father had successfully begun. After several wicked princes had reigned over Judah, Jehoiada the priest, in the minority of Joash, strengthened the things that remained and were ready to die, and, by his vigorous exertions, brought about a great reformation in religion. You remember that Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra and Nehemiah, were firm and faithful friends of God; and every attempt they made to promote his cause was crowned with signal success. I might mention the apostles, Luther and Calvin, David Brainard and many other missionaries, who have done much to spread the savor of Christ's name among both their own countrymen and heathens. So many instances of success in so many ages and parts of the world, in promoting the cause of religion, clearly demonstrate that the work, though attended with great and innumerable difficulties, is really practicable. And this practicability affords a solid ground of encouragement, in undertaking and pursuing the benevolent design. There is something extremely animating in the prospect of success. It always inspires the mind with irresistible zeal and fortitude in seeking a desirable object. This alluring motive, God, in his providence, holds up to the view of his friends, who are sincerely engaged to promote his cause.

2. The promotion of religion is such a noble and laudable design, that it is even glorious to fail in the attempt. In all great and difficult undertakings, there is always more or less danger of being eventually disappointed. It is not in man to command success, even in his most lawful and benevolent pursuits. The men of the world are often frustrated in accomplishing their wisest and best concerted designs. And the friends of God have not unfrequently been disappointed in their pious efforts to spread the knowledge of truth and promote the interests of religion. Many societies formed for this benevolent purpose, have failed of answering their own and the public expectation. But in all cases, in which the failure has not been owing either to the negligence or the unfaithfulness or the despondency of those employed in concerting and executing the design, their attempts have always met with general approbation and applause. Melville Horne appears amiable and respectable, notwithstanding his want of success in his mission, and notwithstanding his own acknowledged timidity and irresolution.

Some of the more ancient promoters of religion, by their bold, though unsuccessful attempts, endeared their names to future ages. At a time of great degeneracy in Judah, "the spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he has also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord." This bold and sincere attempt to promote the reformation and salvation of sinners, though it failed of desired success, finally reflected peculiar honor upon the name of Zechariah. For, when Christ told the Jews that the blood of all the prophets should be required at their hands, he mentioned in particular "the blood of Zacharias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar." Christ himself labored in vain and spent his strength for nought, in preaching the gospel to the Jews; but though Israel were not gathered, yet he was glorious in the eyes of his Father. The apostles preached the same gospel in many places, with little or no success; but yet they were a sweet savor of Christ in them that perished, as well as in them that were saved. John Wickliff was unsuccessful in the same work in which Luther succeeded; but yet his noble, though unsuccessful exertions, have rendered his name illustrious through all the protestant nations. If good men should fail of spreading the gospel to the extent of their desires and expectations, yet their sincere and vigorous attempts shall meet the just approbation of both God and man. Some seem to be backward to engage in this work, for fear they shall not succeed. They imagine they see a lion in the way; but supposing there should be a lion in the way, or supposing the worst that can be supposed, that some unforeseen obstacles shall arise which cannot be surmounted; it will be glorious to fail, after they have done all that was in their power to do. This the friends of God ought to consider as a solid foundation for fortitude and zeal, in undertaking and prosecuting such a noble and laudable design; in which they have nothing to lose, but much to gain, by their most zealous and bold attempts.

3. Those who espouse the cause of religion, have reason to expect the peculiar presence and assistance of God in their pious exertions. The cause of religion is emphatically the cause of God, in the promotion of which his heart is wholly engaged. The zeal of the Lord of hosts centres in the execution of his purpose of grace towards this fallen world. For the attainment of this grand object, he is constantly employing every creature, and directing every event, in the universe.

While any of his friends, therefore, feel his spirit and heartily espouse his cause, he must be pleased with the motives of their conduct; and afford them all the protection and assistance which they need, in doing their part to promote his gracious design. Accordingly we find express promises of his presence with those who sincerely endeavor to promote his cause. He directed Azariah to tell Asa and the men of Judah in his name, "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him." He engaged to assist and protect Jeremiah, while pleading his cause in the midst of the most formidable opposition. "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land; against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." Ezekiel tells us that God gave him a similar promise in a similar case. "And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them." "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house." The command which Christ has laid upon all his faithful ministers to spread the gospel, is enforced by a promise of his continual presence. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Such peculiar promises of divine support, protection and assistance, apply to all those who are heartily engaged to spread the knowledge and blessings of the gospel among the perishing children of men; and are designed to inspire them with resolution and zeal in the great undertaking. Every sincere christian, every faithful minister, every pious and zealous missionary, may adopt the language of the apostle, and say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Whose hearts and hands, therefore, must not be strong, while they are sincerely engaged in that work which they know is highly pleasing to Christ, and in the performance of which, they have just ground to expect his promised presence and protection? Especially when they consider,

4. That their benevolent desires and exertions to advance the

interests of religion, shall certainly be attended with the approbation and prayers of all good men. These have universally imbibed one spirit, and heartily desire the prosperity of Zion. Here the distinction of different denominations ceases to operate, and admits an entire union in sentiment and feeling. Good men, in whatever denomination of christians they are found, unitedly seek the spread of the gospel and the prevalence of religion. And though they may differ in opinion, respecting particular measures to promote the common cause of Christianity, yet they really unite in the general object, and sincerely pray that it may be eventually obtained. They feel the spirit of Paul, who said, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will — What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." The friends of God universally wish well to, and heartily pray for, those who are sincerely engaged in spreading the gospel, and promoting the salvation of sinners. Agreeably to the direction of Christ, they daily offer up their desires to God in that comprehensive petition, "Thy kingdom come." And whenever they see any successfully employed in building up this kingdom, they naturally join with, and assist them in the good work. We have a striking instance of this in the context. Though the ten tribes had generally revolted from the true God, yet there were some pious men among them; and these united heart and hand with Asa the king of Judah, in promoting the cause of true religion. Accordingly it is said, "They fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him." The sincere and successful promoters of religion will always have the approbation and prayers, and, in that way, at least, the concurrence and assistance of all good men. This, indeed, makes them really strong; and strength is a peculiar source of resolution and zeal. Besides,

5. They are equally sure of the esteem and affection of all those whom they shall be instrumental of converting. Though men are naturally averse from being awakened, convinced and converted, yet after they have become reconciled to God, they never fail to feel a peculiar affection for those whom they view as instrumental of their spiritual and eternal good. Paul bears testimony to the ardent affection which some of his hearers had felt towards him, whom they had viewed as the instrument, under God, of their saving conversion. "I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." How much have faithful and successful missionaries been beloved and caressed,

by those to whom they have carried the gospel, which turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God! No men in Judah were more sincerely esteemed and venerated, than Asa, Jehoiada, Hezekiah and Josiah, who were the happy instruments of reforming and converting sinners. If men are faithful and successful in seeking the salvation of souls, they will not only deserve, but receive the gratitude and esteem of those whom they are the means of bringing home to God. This consideration may well support and animate them, in suffering all the reproach and opposition they may meet with in spreading the gospel, and taking the subjects of the prince of darkness out of his hands. I must add,

6. That all the sincere endeavors and extraordinary exertions in favor of religion, shall finally meet a glorious recompense of reward. God has promised to reward men for the faithful improvement of all their talents. And what better use can they make of the blessings of providence, than to employ them in building up the kingdom of God? This is the most important design carrying on in this world, and even in any part of the universe; and, therefore, to be instrumental in promoting this, is to do the greatest good which lies in the power of man to do. No person can employ his time, his interest, his knowledge, and all the weight of his character, to a better purpose than that of spreading the gospel, and promoting the eternal interests of his fellow men; and there is no other way in which he can secure a more ample reward, in the great day of retribution.

But, besides the parable of the talents, we find particular promises to those who make peculiar exertions to build up Zion. Such is the promise in the text. "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded." The same idea is suggested by the apostle James. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." The apostle Paul says to christians in general, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord." And the prophet expressly declares, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." These promises of a glorious recompense in a future state, ought to animate good men at this day, as they animated Moses, the prophets, the apostles, and even Christ himself, to the most bold and vigorous exertions in the cause of religion.

It now remains to improve and apply the subject, with proper freedom and plainness.

In the first place: It is natural to conclude from what has been said, that the friends of God have been very negligent in promoting his cause in the world. When a man, merely for the want of resolution, does not perform any important work which belongs to him to perform, and which he has time, opportunity and abilities to perform, we never scruple to say that he is guilty of negligence. It is certainly the proper business of the friends of God to promote his cause. He formed them vessels of mercy for his own use. He called them out of darkness into marvellous light, that they might be "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." And he has commanded them to seek the interest of his kingdom above every other object. It is, therefore, their appropriate and important business, to promote the cause of religion. And it must be acknowledged that they have long had time, opportunity and ability, to perform the duty devolved upon them. But have they been faithful? Are there not many indubitable marks of their negligence? Does not the languishing state of religion, bear testimony to their timidity and indolence? Had they been bold, and zealous, and active in the cause of God, would there have been so many of the human race, at this day, involved in Jewish, Pagan, Mohammedan, and Papal darkness? Have there not been christians in Asia? Why then has Asia been so long perishing for the want of gospel light? Have there not been christians in Africa? Why then has Africa been so long perishing for the want of Christian knowledge? Have there not been christians in Europe? are there not many there still? Why then is so great a part of that quarter of the world still ignorant of the pure doctrines of the gospel? Has there not long been a succession of pious men in America? Why then are there so many of the aboriginals still perishing in their native barbarity and ignorance? Have we not many godly ministers in these United States? Why then are there so many declining churches, so many destitute congregations, and so many individuals abandoned to vice, irreligion and infidelity?

These are plain indications of negligence in the friends of God, for years, if not for ages past. Had christians in every age possessed the spirit of the apostles and the primitive believers, what great things would they have done to promote the cause of Christ! Or had they been as wise as the men of the world, and as zealous to promote the salvation of others, as sinners are to promote their temporal interests; the gospel would have long since been carried to the ends of the earth.

Or, indeed, if the same zealous, bold and undaunted spirit, which has lately fired the breast of christians in Europe and America, had fired their breasts but a few years ago, the face of religion would have undoubtedly appeared, at this time, unspeakably different. Nothing has been wanting, since the revival of learning, the invention of printing, and the discovery of the magnet, to prevent the universal spread of the gospel, but merely Christian resolution and zeal. This long and great negligence calls for the humiliation of christians in general, and especially of Christian ministers and magistrates; who ought to have been the first in zeal and resolution to promote the cause of Christ and the spread of the gospel. The world now looks like the field of the sluggard, because christians, like the sluggard, have been crying, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." The present melancholy state of Christianity throughout the world, reproaches all its friends for their past irresolution and negligence.

The next thing to be inferred from what has been said is, that none will ever do much to forward the work of spreading the gospel, without a large share of Christian zeal and resolution. Men may be pious and sincerely wish well to the benevolent design, and yet do more to defeat than to accomplish it, if destitute of a truly missionary spirit. In order to carry into effect such a difficult and laborious undertaking, those who enter upon it must be all awake and alive to the important object before them. But none will feel a proper concern for others, who do not feel a proper concern for themselves. None will be greatly engaged to promote religion abroad, who are not equally engaged to promote it at home. None have any encouragement to embark in the adventurous cause of propagating the gospel, unless their hearts glow with love to God, and a tender concern for the souls of men. They must be weaned from the world, they must be stripped of mercenary motives, they must be willing to deny themselves and take up the cross; before they can possess that firm and persevering resolution which is necessary to meet the reproach and opposition to be expected, in spreading a religion which has never failed to awaken all the malignant passions of the human heart. They must sit down and count the cost, lest, after having put their hand to the plow, they should look back, and betray the cause which they engaged to befriend. Why have attempts of this kind so often proved abortive? Has it not been chiefly owing to a worldly spirit, which has palsied all pious resolution and zeal? And who can expect to speed better, without a better spirit? What will lifeless meetings, what will proper resolutions, what will verbal engagements

avail, without bold, zealous, persevering exertions? No person is properly prepared to be a member, and much less to be a missionary, of this society, who has not a heart to spend and be spent in the arduous undertaking, and to meet all the evils and embarrassments which may eventually attend it. A cold heart, a timid mind, a feeble hand, is by no means fit to be employed in a work which calls for the warmest zeal, and the most vigorous exertions.

But since the friends of God have such good ground for unshaken resolution in promoting the cause of religion, we may justly infer, in the last place, that it is not yet too late to attempt the propagation of the gospel through this extensive country. Though we have lost much time, and neglected many favorable opportunities for such an undertaking; though an awful stupor has seized the minds of many of the professed friends of God; though the enemies of religion have, within a very few years, greatly increased in numbers and strength; though they have set every engine in motion, to spread error, Deism, and even Atheism, through every corner of our land; though, I say, all these obstacles stare us in the face, and must be overcome, in order to propagate the gospel among those who are perishing for the want of it, yet it may not be too late to effect the difficult and important design. Good men, as well as bad, are able to do almost any thing which they think they are able to do. Difficulties vanish before resolution. There never was so great a declension of religion in Judah, but that a reformation was always effected, when good men had only zeal and resolution enough to attempt it. If the few friends of God in this country, therefore, were only awake, united, and possessed of proper zeal and fortitude, they might, under the divine direction and influence, put a check upon the progress of vice and infidelity, and extend the limits of the Redeemer's kingdom where Satan is now reigning without control, and leading multitudes of poor, deluded creatures to eternal destruction. Christianity is a cause which is destined to prevail; and which is destined to prevail, by the blessing of God on human exertions.

This we, my brethren, have in practice professed to believe, by uniting for the purpose of sending the gospel to those who are perishing for the lack of vision. "Let us be strong, therefore, and let not our hands be weak;" for we have all the encouragement desirable, to pursue with vigor and fortitude the work which we have seriously and deliberately undertaken. Though we and others have too long neglected it, and, by our neglect, given rise to great and formidable difficulties, yet these mountains shall become plains, before a pious, bold, missionary spirit. It has been God's usual method, to arise and plead his

own cause, at those very times when it appeared to be on the very point of extinction. It was when Jeroboam the son of Nebat had made Israel to sin, and well nigh corrupted the whole church, that God raised up Asa and others, to rekindle the dying, glimmering flame of religion. It was when the two tribes and a half were pining away in their iniquities, and resembled the valley of dry bones, in Babylon, that God awakened the zeal and blessed the exertions of his friends, to bring about their conversion and deliverance. It was when the Man of sin had defaced and nearly destroyed the Christian religion, that God raised up a constellation of bold and zealous men, to espouse and spread his sinking cause. Hence the late extraordinary efforts in Europe and America to "crush the wretch," or, to use a more decent expression, *to extinguish Christianity*, afford a strong ground of faith, that the time, yea, the set time to favor Zion, is come. For it has been God's uniform conduct, when the enemy came in like a flood upon his people, to set up a standard against him. And we are happy to say that God has already begun to set up his standard in various parts of the Christian world; and his friends are now rallying around it, with uncommon zeal and resolution, to defend and promote the interests of his kingdom. An unusual missionary spirit has spread through England, Scotland, Ireland, many parts of Germany, and a number of the United States. This ought to animate us, as it animated the directors of the Missionary Society in London. In one of their communications to the society, they say, "From Germany, and a vast body of associated ministers in Lusatia, assembled from all parts of Christendom, we have received the most fraternal good wishes for the accomplishment of our designs, and their great satisfaction in our enterprise, which has warmed and stimulated them to fresh exertions; while they cry day and night to God, for our success, from the Carpathian mountains to the snows of Norway." They add, "America, stirred up by your example, has caught the holy flame. So that the Lord Jesus, the great Head of the church, seems to be awakening a similar spirit throughout all places of his dominion." There is yet another promising prospect before us. In the last and present year, there has been a more extensive and extraordinary effusion of the divine influence in many parts of our land, than has been known in the course of almost sixty years. God is now visibly arising to plead his own cause; and shall we not, when we hear the sound of his goings, bestir ourselves to promote the prosperity of Zion? Under all these favorable circumstances, if we are not wanting in our zeal, resolution and exertions, we have

nothing to fear in the pursuit of our great and interesting object.

What if our number be small? A small number firmly united in sentiment and zeal, may do wonders in promoting the cause of Christ. This has been demonstrated by those, who first carried the gospel to three quarters of the world. What if our first and feeble efforts should meet with little or no success? This, instead of throwing us into despondency, should serve to rouse us to more zealous and vigorous exertions, in such a difficult and important undertaking. What if our pecuniary resources are few, and unprotected by legal authority? There is no ground of discouragement on this account, provided we are only faithful and successful in the discharge of our duty. It is only for God to bestow his grace upon our churches, as he did upon the churches of Macedonia, and our churches will to their power, yea, beyond their power, abound in the riches of their liberality, and even pray us to receive their gifts, and take upon us the care of ministering to the relief of those who are famishing for the bread of life. What if the missionary field be wide? This presents an animating motive, rather than a discouraging obstacle. The prospect of the salvation of millions should awaken our desires and endeavors to civilize those who are not civilized, and evangelize those who are not evangelized, through this widely extended continent. The United States are abundantly able, in respect to numbers and wealth, to spread the gospel through all North and South America. And we were, there is reason to believe, raised up and formed into a civil and religious community, to perform this service for God, in grateful return for his distinguishing and protecting mercy.

But where, some may ask, shall we find men of a truly missionary spirit, who will freely sacrifice their ease, their interest, their health, and even their lives, to carry the gospel to the poor in our new settlements, and to the savages in the wilderness? This, we acknowledge, is the greatest apparent difficulty to be expected and to be surmounted, in the business before us. But this we may safely refer to God. It is his to provide instruments to do his own work. But if the harvest be plenteous, and the laborers few, it is ours to pray the Lord of the harvest, to send forth laborers into his harvest. And may we not cheerfully confide in him, who hath formed so many missionary societies in New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts, to raise up a sufficient number of pious, zealous, bold missionaries, to carry their pious and important design into effect?

But let us turn from the dark to the bright side of the work, in which we have publicly engaged. What if the set time to

favor Zion should be at hand? What if there should be a general effusion of the Divine Spirit upon all our religious societies? What if the attention of both ministers and people every where, should be awakened to the object we are pursuing, and they should, like the men of Israel, fall in to our assistance in abundance? What if the numerous inhabitants in the new settlements should generally be formed into large and flourishing churches? What if the poor heathens should have an opportunity and a heart to embrace the gospel? In a word, what if this whole continent should be both civilized and gospelized, through the instrumentality of this and other missionary societies? Who would not have reason to rejoice? And who would have more reason to rejoice, than those who were the most sincere, active, bold and zealous in bringing about such happy events? These are not imaginary prospects. If God intends to make us a happy, he will make us a holy people; and if he intends to make us a holy people, he will employ the proper means to effect his purpose. Let us then, my brethren, take courage; let our hearts and hands be strong; for there are certainly prospects within our view, which, whether realized, either before or after we are laid in the dust, will abundantly reward us for all that we can do, to build up the kingdom of our Divine Redeemer.

SERMON XIII.

UNITY OF SENTIMENT.

PREACHED BEFORE THE CONVENTION OF CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS, IN BOSTON, MAY 31, 1804.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. — 1 CORINTHIANS, i. 10.

UNITY of sentiment has a happy tendency to promote and preserve that mutual affection, which ought to reign in the hearts of all the followers of Christ. There is nothing which can disturb the peace, or alienate the affections of any society of christians, while they really believe and openly profess the same religious sentiments. The church at Corinth, which Paul planted, abounded in brotherly love, so long as they mutually agreed in believing and professing the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. But when a disagreement in their religious opinions appeared, it destroyed their mutual attachment, and involved them in bitter animosities and contentions. The apostle, perceiving the primary cause of these deplorable evils, laid the axe at the root of the tree, and entreated them to unite in sentiment, as the only proper and effectual way to recover their former peace and tranquillity. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." By this he did not mean to inculcate insincerity, or urge them to speak the same thing, while they did not believe the same thing; and therefore he immediately adds, "but

that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Such a unity of faith seems to be his darling theme, in his writings to other churches. In his epistle to the Philippians, he says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." And in his address to the Ephesians, he enlarges upon the subject, and represents Christ as appointing the means of grace for the particular purpose of uniting all his followers in the belief of the same truths. "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." These passages confirm the construction we have given of the text, and leave us no room to doubt that the apostle meant to enjoin it upon all christians, to be united in their religious sentiments. It is, therefore, the intention of the ensuing discourse, to illustrate the propriety of this divine injunction.

Paul was a man of sound judgment, and of extensive information. He had studied Moses and the prophets. He had read the writings of the heathen sages, and thoroughly examined their religious opinions. He had been well acquainted with the Jewish teachers, and had once been carried away with their vain traditions. And besides all this, he had, upon clear conviction, renounced his former creed, and cordially embraced the pure principles of Christianity. Hence he knew, by experience as well as speculation, whether men ought to be required, notwithstanding their various talents, their various means of information, and their various modes of thinking, to become united in their religious sentiments. Upon this subject he was the most impartial and the most competent judge. And since he has solemnly enjoined it upon the whole Christian world, to speak the same thing, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, it must be presumption to call the propriety of his own precept in question. But though we may not dispute the propriety of the apostle's injunction, yet we may inquire into the reasons upon which it is founded. And there are two very plain and obvious rea-

reasons, why christians should be required to think alike upon religious subjects.

One reason is, that God has given them an infallible rule of faith. His word contains a complete and connected system of divine truth. All the doctrines which compose this system are to be believed, and all which stand in opposition to it are to be rejected. It is a perfect standard, by which all religious opinions are to be tried and decided. Hence those who are assaulted by false teachers, are directed to regulate their faith by this criterion. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The apostle agrees with the prophet, in representing the sacred oracles, as an unerring guide in matters of faith as well as practice. He asserts, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." God having given christians such a complete system of divine truth, there is a plain propriety in his requiring them to believe not only that it is a complete system of divine truth, but also to believe all the particular truths, which compose the system. For it would be absurd to require them to believe the system in general, and yet allow them to disbelieve any or all the particular truths contained in it. So that if it be conceded that the Bible is any rule of faith, it must be acknowledged that it is a perfect rule of faith. And since all christians have this perfect rule of faith in their hands, God may justly require them to form their religious opinions exactly according to it; which is precisely the same thing as to require them to unite in their religious sentiments. For it is a universal maxim that when two things agree with a third, they also agree with each other. If therefore, we say, as we ought to say, that God may properly require all christians to agree with the Bible; then we must say that he may properly require them to agree with each other, or to "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." But since it may be thought that this argument is lame, because christians are imperfect creatures, who are incapable of understanding and following that perfect rule of faith which God has given them; it seems necessary to observe,

In the second place, That the word of God is not only a perfect rule of faith, but sufficiently plain and intelligible to every capacity. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

The word of God is no less plain than powerful. It must be plain, because the truths contained in it naturally result from the character of God, and from the various relations which mankind bear to him and to one another. All who are capable of knowing that they are the creatures of God, are equally capable of knowing what he has required them to believe concerning himself, and concerning their own character, their present situation, and their future state. This may be easily illustrated. The doctrine of moral depravity, for instance, is agreeable to the observation and experience of all the children of men. The doctrine of divine decrees is level to every one's capacity, who is able to form any just conception of the existence and character of God. The doctrine of Christ's atonement is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, who have always entertained some idea of a Mediator between them and their offended Sovereign. The doctrine of divine influence upon the human heart, in the production of its moral exercises, has been generally believed by heathens as well as christians. The doctrine of God's existing a Trinity in Unity, and the doctrine of the personal union of humanity and divinity in the glorious Immanuel, are as easy to understand, though not so easy to explain, as any other doctrines in scripture. Nor is it any more difficult to remove all plausible objections against these high points in theology, than to remove all plausible objections against the existence of motion, or spirit, or personal identity, or any other visible or invisible object. These observations might be extended to every doctrine of the gospel; but there is a shorter and easier way to demonstrate the plainness of that rule of faith which we find in the sacred oracles. The Bible is the word of God; he gave it to be a rule of faith to all; he knew the characters, the circumstances, and the capacities of all; it must therefore, be plain and intelligible to all. To deny this, is to impeach both the wisdom and goodness of God in giving us his word. Now, if God has given a perfect rule of faith to all, which all are capable of understanding, then there appears to be a propriety in his requiring all to believe and speak the same things in matters of religion. It is no less proper that he should require all to believe alike in respect to the whole system of revealed truth, than that he should require all to believe alike in respect to any single article of Christianity. But who will say that it is not proper that he should require all to believe alike, in respect to any one doctrine of the gospel? But if we allow the propriety of his requiring all to believe alike in one, in two, or in ten points, we must be constrained to allow that it is equally proper that he should require all to believe alike in all points. No reason can be assigned for a single

exception in this case, if the rule of faith be perfectly right, and altogether intelligible.

Though these few observations may be deemed sufficient to establish the propriety of God's requiring christians to be united in their religious sentiments, yet candor seems to demand a fair and distinct consideration of some of the most ingenious and plausible things which have been urged against this unpalatable doctrine.

The objection which first occurs to the mind upon this subject, arises from the great and visible diversity in the intellectual powers and external circumstances of christians. It is supposed to be naturally, as well as morally impossible, that they should all think alike upon religious subjects, so long as this internal and external difference remains.

The whole force of this objection will vanish, if we only consider that unity of sentiment does not require equality of knowledge. Ten, or twenty, or twenty thousand persons, of different degrees of knowledge, may be united in the same sentiment, or in the same scheme of sentiments. A pastor and his people may embraee the same religious opinions in general, though as individuals, they may possess very different powers of mind, and very different degrees of mental improvement. A whole denomination of christians may be united in their distinguishing tenets, though some may be much better able than others to explain and defend their peculiar system of doctrines. It is easy to see how such a unity of sentiment may take place among such a variety of individuals, without an equality of knowledge. For, so far as they all know the same scheme of sentiments, they all agree; and so far as some feel their deficiency in knowledge, they do not pretend to judge; and, of consequence, do not presume to differ. And it is only in this way, that there can be perfect unity of sentiment in heaven. As one star differs from another star in glory, so angels will differ from saints, and one saint differ from another, in the state of perfection. But their difference in knowledge will not create any diversity of opinions respecting the same subjects. Saints will agree with angels so far as their knowledge extends; but so far as it fails, they will wait for farther light. And just men made perfect in holiness, will conduct in the same manner towards those who had been endowed with superior powers, and had been longer instructed in the school of heaven. It is, therefore, just as easy to see how christians may, notwithstanding their difference in knowledge and talents, come to an entire unity of faith in this life, as in the life to come.

The wide difference in the education and instruction of christians, is often supposed to be an insuperable bar in the

way of their becoming sentimentally united, in their present imperfect state.

There is no doubt but christians are extremely prone to imbibe and retain the peculiar doctrines in which they have been early and uniformly instructed. But since they have the word of God in their hands, it is completely in their power to bring their own opinions and the opinions of their instructers to an infallible standard, and to decide for themselves what they ought to believe, or to disbelieve. Neither their private nor public teachers can lay them under a natural necessity of thinking, or reasoning, or believing wrong; but only throw difficulties in the way of their thinking, or reasoning, or believing right. And it is their indispensable duty, if they meet with such difficulties, to surmount them; and form their religious sentiments according to the holy scriptures, which will necessarily unite them in the truth. It was in this way, that Paul, and all the primitive christians, whether Jews or Pagans, divested themselves of the errors and prejudices of education, and became united in the belief of the gospel.

Another thing strenuously urged against the doctrine we are pleading for, is the right of private judgment, which is supposed to give christians full liberty to differ in opinion as much as they please.

It is readily granted that every christian has a right to think, to read, and to converse upon any religious sentiment, in order to collect evidence of its truth, or falsehood; and after that, to judge according to the evidence which he has collected. But he has no right, in any case, to examine and judge under the influence of prejudice, and form his opinion contrary to the dictates of reason and the declarations of scripture. Though the Bereans were commended for searching the scriptures, in order to determine whether Paul preached the truth, yet we have no ground to suppose that they would have been commended, if they had rejected the truth after they had searched the scriptures. What they were commended for was, their honestly seeking the best evidence of the truth, and their heartily embracing it upon that evidence. This was their duty as well as privilege; but it was neither their privilege nor duty, to examine and reject the doctrines of the apostle, which were perfectly agreeable to the word of God. In this instance, we see the nature and extent of the right of private judgment. It is a right which all christians have, to see with their own eyes, and to form their religious sentiments according to the infallible standard of truth. So that the proper exercise of this right will not suffer them to differ, but constrain them to see and to embrace the same truths.

There is but one other objection, which appears to be worthy of notice; and this is drawn from the fourteenth chapter of Romans, in which the apostle is supposed to allow christians to differ in their religious sentiments, and only exhorts them to view their difference in opinions with a candid and charitable eye.

This is rather an objection against the apostle himself, than against the leading sentiment in this discourse; for it supposes that in writing to the Romans, he contradicts what he had written, five or six years before, to the Corinthians. But who can really suppose that he would require the Corinthians to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, and yet expressly allow the Romans to differ in their religious opinions? The truth is, the apostle wrote consistently, and his consistency will appear, if we only look into the chapter from which the objection is drawn. He is there treating of the ceremonial law, which was then abrogated by the gospel. He allows that real christians might entertain different opinions concerning the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, which were things in their own nature indifferent, and which might be observed or neglected, under a sense of duty. Accordingly, he forbids them to censure one another on account of such non-essential points of difference, and exhorts them to exercise mutual affection and esteem. But, at the same time, he reminds them that they must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, where their opinions as well as actions would be either approved, or condemned. From this it appears that the apostle did not allow the christians at Rome, any more than the christians at Corinth, to differ in opinion; but if they did differ in opinion, concerning mere non-essential points, he exhorted them to exercise mutual love and forbearance. This is the plain meaning of the apostle in the fourteenth chapter of Romans, which is entirely consistent with his requiring all christians to "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Having set the propriety of God's requiring christians to be united in their religious sentiments, in as clear and consistent a light as I am able, I shall now attempt to point out a number of serious and interesting truths, which naturally flow from the subject.

1. If God does, with propriety, require christians to believe alike upon religious subjects, then it is not a matter of indifference what religious sentiments they embrace.

Some seem to think that there is but one truth which is absolutely necessary to be believed, and that is the inspiration of the scriptures. They suppose, if men only believe the Bible to

be divine, they are at perfect liberty to believe, or to disbelieve the doctrines contained in that sacred volume, without the least offence to God. Yea, some presume to say that God is as much pleased with that variety which appears in the faith of christians, as with that variety which appears in their external features. On this supposition, it must be a matter of total indifference what scheme of religious sentiments any man embraces, in order to obtain the divine favor. But how can this pleasing and prevailing opinion be reconciled with that unity of faith which we have been considering? It appears that men are bound to believe what is true, by the same authority by which they are bound to do what is right. They are as much under law to God, in respect to faith, as in respect to practice. They have no more reason, therefore, to hope that God will save them, without believing the doctrines which the gospel contains, than without performing the duties which the gospel enjoins. Their future and eternal happiness as much depends upon the rectitude of their faith, as upon the rectitude of their conduct. It is true that every deviation from the law of faith will not exclude them from the kingdom of heaven; nor will every deviation from the law of love; but there are some essential doctrines to be believed, as well as some essential duties to be performed, in order to obtain eternal life. Our Saviour said to the Jews in his day, "For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." And in his last interview with his apostles he said unto them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The faith here mentioned is saving faith; this saving faith implies a belief of the gospel; this belief of the gospel implies a belief of the doctrines of the gospel; and this belief of the doctrines of the gospel, our Saviour affirms, is absolutely necessary in order to salvation. We have no right, therefore, to entertain the thought that it is a matter of indifference what religious sentiments men embrace; for it appears that God has suspended his favor and their everlasting happiness, upon the condition of their believing, as well as loving, the great and essential doctrines of the gospel.

2. If christians have been justly required to be united in their religious sentiments, then we have reason to believe that they have contracted a great deal of guilt from age to age by embracing and propagating error. Though the multitude of them who first believed the gospel, were of one heart and of one soul, and continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, yet this union of faith and of love was of short duration. Some among these primitive professors of Christianity

soon raised an unhappy dispute concerning circumcision, which could not be decided without the aid of an ecclesiastical council. This, we know, was followed by greater and more dangerous errors and disputes, which corrupted the purity and disturbed the peace of the principal churches in Greece and Asia, even while the apostles were living. And the same mystery of iniquity which began to work in their day, has continued to operate, through every age of the church to the present time. There have been, and still are, as great and dangerous errors in the Christian, as in the Pagan world. Indeed, the very errors of Jews, Heathens, and Mohammedans, are often to be found in Christian creeds. And these corruptions of Christianity have divided the Christian world into a vast variety of sects and denominations; who have hated, opposed and persecuted each other, with fiery zeal and unrelenting cruelty. Here then every one must see, that those who have embraced and propagated such gross and destructive errors, have had no excuse to make. They were favored with a plain and infallible rule of faith. They were tenderly and solemnly admonished to speak the same things, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. And they were threatened with the loss of the divine favor, if they either added to, or deducted from, the sacred canon of scripture. They have always, therefore, drawn upon themselves a heavy load of guilt, by causing divisions, debates and persecutions; by corrupting the sentiments and destroying the souls of men; and by obstructing the spread of the gospel and the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom.

3. It appears from what has been said, that christians who are united in the belief of the truth, have a right to blame those who think differently from them upon religious subjects. We often hear it said, that one man has no right to blame another merely for differing from him in his religious sentiments. But why may not any man who really believes a certain doctrine of the gospel, blame another for disbelieving and denying that doctrine? The notion that men ought not to blame one another for thinking differently upon religious subjects, is built upon the principle that none can really know that their own sentiments are certainly right. But this is a false principle; because there is a plain and infallible rule of faith, which gives those who conform to it, certain evidence of their believing the truth. And a certainty of being right in sentiment is very different from the strongest confidence of being so. Those who embrace error, may be extremely confident that they embrace the truth, and they may mistake confidence for certainty. But should they ever actually embrace the truth,

they will then know that their present opinion is right, and that their former one was wrong. Paul verily thought that he knew the truth, while he rejected the gospel; but when he really embraced the gospel, he knew that he knew the truth, and that his former opinion was a gross and dangerous error. The question among christians is not, who are probably, but who are certainly right, in their belief of the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel? There is certainty to be obtained in these points; and all who have obtained it, know that those who differ from them in these points are certainly wrong. It is true, indeed, their knowing themselves to be right, is no proof to others that they are so; but it authorizes them to say positively that all who deny the great truths which they believe, are grossly and criminally erroneous.

Accordingly, the inspired writers every where direct those who embrace the truth, and know that they embrace the truth, to avoid, to condemn, and even reject all such as hold and propagate false and dangerous opinions. "Cease, my son," says Solomon, "to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." Paul says to the Romans, "I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." He directs the Galatians to condemn and reject the perverters of the gospel. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And before he concludes the epistle, he adds, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you." The beloved and benevolent apostle John, after all his pathetic exhortations to brotherly love, expressly forbids christians to receive, or even countenance the teachers of false doctrine. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." In these instances, the apostles appear to follow the example of their divine Master, who solemnly warned his friends to avoid and reject false doctrines and false teachers. Whilst he was upon earth, he said, "Beware of false prophets." "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." And since his ascension to heaven, he highly censured the churches in Asia for not censuring and rejecting those who had crept in among them, and propagated gross and fatal errors. It is therefore extremely difficult to conceive how it is

possible for those who are united in the belief of the truth, to obey these divine directions and admonitions, without disapproving and condemning, and in some cases, totally excluding from their communion, such as openly deny the essential doctrines of Christianity.

4. If there be a propriety in God's requiring christians to be united in the belief of the truth, then there appears to be no propriety in attempting to unite them in affection, without uniting them in sentiment. Many seem to be much engaged to promote Christian union and harmony in this way. They warmly urge us to overlook the vast variety of religious errors in the Christian world, and to unite in affection, with all who bear the Christian name. They would have us give up the groundless hope of ever becoming united in sentiment; and to use all our efforts to bring about mutual love and peace among all the professors of Christianity. But is this either a proper, or lawful method, to obtain the desirable end proposed? It seems the apostle did not deem this a proper method to remove the divisions and disputes in the church of Corinth. Instead of urging them to overlook each other's errors, and agree to differ in sentiments, he exhorted them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, that then they might love as brethren, speak the same thing, and live in perfect peace. And this is the only proper way to promote brotherly love, among any, or all denominations of christians, upon a solid and permanent foundation. For the brotherly love which the gospel requires, is very different from general benevolence. We ought to feel benevolently towards all mankind, and wish well to the bitterest enemies of Christianity. But it is hard to conceive how the true believers of the gospel can exercise brotherly love, to those who appear to disbelieve and despise the precious truths upon which they found their hopes of heaven, and in the contemplation of which they expect the happiness of heaven will chiefly consist. They can no more exercise brotherly love to such as disbelieve and deny the essential doctrines of the gospel, than they can exercise brotherly love to such as deny the gospel itself. Unity of faith is the only proper basis of unity of spirit. Christians may be, and must be united in affection, so far as they are united in sentiment; but so far as they are disunited in sentiment, they are and must be disunited in affection. There is, therefore, no propriety, nor prospect of success in attempting to unite the professed friends of Christ in brotherly love, without first uniting them in the belief of the same essential doctrines of the gospel.

But supposing that the whole Christian world could be brought

to unite in affection, while they retain all their different and inconsistent opinions; it would be utterly wrong to attempt it. For, if christians should form such a coalition, it would be criminal in itself, and highly injurious to the cause of religion. They would disobey the divine injunction, to "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." They would become an unchristian combination, to countenance and support each other in all their errors and delusions. They would, in practice, justify all the errors and delusions of deists, atheists and skeptics. And they would actually exercise that same kind of catholicism, which heretics and infidels have so long been pleading for; and by which they have done more mischief to Christianity, than by any other weapon which they have ever employed against it. Under the pretext of promoting universal toleration, they have taught multitudes and multitudes, to extend their catholicism to disbelievers, deniers and opposers of the gospel. This unlimited catholicism naturally tends to subvert the gospel, and to involve the whole world in error and infidelity. Let none, therefore, cherish this spirit and strengthen the hearts and hands of the enemies of truth, by attempting to unite christians in affection, without uniting them in the belief of the great and essential doctrines of Christianity.

It now appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that it seriously concerns all who acknowledge the truth and divinity of the gospel, to use every proper method to become entirely united in sentiment. The apostle enjoins this duty upon the Corinthians, with peculiar solemnity and pathos: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." He addresses the Ephesians on the same subject, with equal ardor and zeal. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called — endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The propriety and importance of this, he proceeds to show, by observing "there is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." And he inculcates this sentimental union upon the Philippians, with still warmer and tenderer feelings. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." If these divine precepts ever bound christians, they bind them still. If christians were

ever able to obey these divine precepts, they are still able to obey them. And if christians were ever under obligation, they are still under obligation, to use every proper method to become united in their religious sentiments.

For this purpose, therefore, let them freely examine the various points in which they mutually differ. This is, undoubtedly, too much neglected on all sides, through indolence or aversion. One side are very apt to imagine that those who differ from them, have no scripture nor reason on their side, but are altogether governed by an improper spirit, in forming their opinions upon religious subjects. But if they would freely examine each other's peculiar sentiments, they would probably find that those who differ from them, have sometimes been as laborious, impartial and judicious, in searching after truth, as they have been; and have approached nearer to it in some points than they have done. There is no ground to suppose that any one denomination of christians, nor any individuals in any one denomination, have engrossed all truth, and renounced all error. If christians in general, therefore, would more freely examine each other's sentiments, they would think much more nearly alike upon disputed subjects.

It would have the same happy tendency, if they would examine the points of difference between them, candidly, as well as freely. Candor would dispose every one to lay aside prejudice and partiality, and make him willing to discover whatever is erroneous in his own sentiments, and whatever is true in the opinions of others. It is much more owing to a deficiency in candor, than to a deficiency in discernment, that so many disputes arise, and remain unsettled among the various denominations of christians. If they would put on candor, it would cure them of bigotry, and open the eyes of their understanding, to discover truth and error wherever they exist. And they must imbibe this amiable and conciliating spirit, before they can have the least ground to expect that they shall approach any nearer to the unity of the faith.

But the most direct and effectual method they can possibly take to become united in sentiment, is practically to acknowledge the word of God to be the only infallible standard of truth and error. It is one thing to acknowledge the infallibility of scripture in theory, and another to acknowledge it in practice. If we practically acknowledge this sacred guide, it will restrain us from paying a blind and partial deference to any human authority in matters of faith. There is no man, perhaps, who is not liable, in some cases, to swerve from the scriptures of truth, through fear of offending, or through desire of pleasing those whom he esteems wiser and better than himself. This

danger our Saviour foresaw, and forewarned his followers to guard against. "Call no man your father upon the earth." They must strictly regard this caution, if they would become united in their religious opinions. And if they do regard it, they will naturally meet upon the same ground, and adopt the same sentiments. The Bible is a magnet, which will necessarily draw all men to the same point, if they will only yield to its attractive influence. Let them only think, and speak, and walk, by the same rule, and they will become perfectly united in sentiment and practice, without the least condescension to each other.

There are various considerations, which urge christians to pursue these plain and easy methods of cultivating such a sentimental union among themselves. It will directly tend to unite them in affection. We find that those who agree in their speculations upon any art, or science, commonly feel a mutual attachment, arising from their concurrence in opinion. And a unity of faith never fails to produce a mutual esteem and affection among christians. Though some profess an unlimited catholicism, yet they, as well as others, appear to be the most intimately and affectionately united with those with whom they are best united in sentiment. Universal observation and experience, in this case, speak louder than words; and compel us to believe that mutual affection will naturally flow from mutual agreement in opinion. Let christians be of one mind, and they will be of one heart. Let them think alike and speak alike, and they will lay aside their prejudice, their discord, their alienation of affection, and become in reality a band of brothers. This is confirmed by the sure word of prophecy, which predicts the future peace and harmony of the church, as resulting from the knowledge of the truth. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."

In the mean time, by uniting in sentiment, christians will not only prepare themselves for the latter day glory of the church, but remove one of the strongest prejudices of unbelievers against the Bible. They make a very ill use of that diversity of opinions which they discover among the professed friends of

divine revelation. They pretend to reject the Bible, because they cannot understand it. They say, if it had any plain and consistent meaning, those who believe it to be divine, would explain it in the same manner, and derive from it the same doctrines. And since the professors of the gospel themselves, make it mean any thing, every thing, or nothing, they say they choose to reject it, and adhere to the plain and intelligible book of nature, which speaks the same language to all, and which cannot be corrupted, or misinterpreted, by ignorant or designing men. But, however unjust this mode of thinking and speaking is, christians are under peculiar obligation to remove the occasion of it, by uniting in the belief and profession of the first principles of the oracles of God.

And by doing this, they will not only stop the mouths of cavillers, but at the same time, strengthen and animate one another, in promoting the cause of Christ. When they are united in the belief of the same truths, and in the pursuit of the same objects, they will appear formidable to the unbelieving world; and convince them of their folly as well as guilt, in opposing a cause which will certainly prevail, and triumph over all opposition. Many are ready to imagine that the cause of religion will fail, just like the cause of particular denominations of christians. They know that one sect has flourished and triumphed for a while, and then gradually decayed and become extinct; and they expect that all denominations will share the same fate, and Christianity itself be erased from the earth. But if christians were united in the truth, they would destroy these vain hopes and expectations of the ungodly, and feel a peculiar courage and resolution to use every effort to bring mankind to the obedience of faith. They are entreated, therefore, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to become of one mind; that they may, with one heart and one hand, promote his cause and interest in the world.

Now, my brethren, may we who are "stewards of the mysteries of God," apply this interesting subject to ourselves. Let us remember that we must stand before the judgment seat of Christ, who will expose and condemn every one of our errors, before the assembled universe; for he has told us that "every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." The apostle Paul also assures us that men's principles will be brought into view, and either approved or condemned, in the great day of decision. "I have laid the foundation; — but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's

work shall be made manifest. For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." It is our interest as well as duty, to come to the light, and renounce every false sentiment which we have ever embraced. If we believe the truth, if we love the truth, if we preach the truth, it will afford us peculiar consolation in the close of life, and enable each of us to say, in the nearest view of eternity, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Amen.

SERMON XIV.

FAITHFUL MINISTERS SEEK THE SALVATION OF THEIR PEOPLE.

ORDINATION OF REV. JAMES TUFTS, WORDSBOROUGH, VT., NOVEMBER 4, 1795.

For I seek not yours, but you. — 2 Corinthians, xii. 14

The false teachers who had crept into the church of Corinth, endeavored to sink the reputation of the apostle Paul. This laid him under the disagreeable necessity of speaking in his own defence. He first reminds the Corinthians of the miracles which he had publicly wrought, to confirm his divine mission. He next appeals to the reproaches, necessities and persecutions which he had cheerfully endured in promoting the cause of Christ. And, in the last place, he meekly but confidently professes his pure and disinterested motive in preaching the gospel. "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not yours but you." Though his enemies charged him with preaching from mercenary motives, yet he was conscious to himself that he had preached with a uniform desire to promote the salvation of souls. And as in water face answereth to face, so does the heart of one faithful minister to another. They all propose the same noble and benevolent end in preaching, that the apostle Paul proposed; though they are far from being agreeably wise, faithful and successful in pursuing it. Agreeably, therefore, to the spirit of the text, I shall endeavor to illustrate this plain and practical truth; that faithful ministers preach the gospel with a desire to promote the salvation of souls.

The great apostle frequently and solemnly declares that this was

his governing motive in preaching the gospel. To the Corinthians he says, "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not yours, but you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." Again he demands, "Think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? We speak before God in Christ; but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying." To these same persons he makes the same profession, in his first epistle to them. "Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, wo is unto me if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward, then? Verily, that when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law; to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." When he had called the elders of the church of Ephesus to Miletus, he said unto them, "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you, at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." His appeal and profession to the Jews was still more solemn and striking. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh." "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

Thus Paul uniformly and sincerely aimed, in preaching the gospel, to promote the salvation of his hearers. And this is the great object which all faithful ministers pursue, in the course of their ministry. Like the primitive preachers, they "warn every man, and teach every man in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." They consider their hearers as probationers for eternity, and labor to promote their future and eternal good. This is so evident that nothing farther need be said to illustrate it. But yet it may be proper and useful, on this occasion, to inquire why faithful ministers preach the gospel with a desire to save the souls of men.

In answer to this inquiry, I would observe, first: Faithful ministers desire to reach the end of their appointment. Christ hath let them know that he instituted their sacred order to prepare men for a future and eternal state. For this purpose he hath given them their commission to preach the gospel. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This general commission is explained by Christ's particular commission to Paul, which runs in this solemn form, "Rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." This design of the ministry is confirmed by another passage in the fourth of Ephesians. "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." "And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." These passages represent ministers as appointed for the great purpose of preparing man to appear in the beauties of holiness, in a future state. And this design of their appointment, all faithful ministers sincerely wish to answer. They desire to fall in with the designs of Christ, and to be workers together with him, in accomplishing the purposes of his grace. So Paul professes in the name of all his faithful brethren in the ministry: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we

pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." As every faithful ambassador means to obey the will of his prince, and attain the object of his appointment, so every faithful minister means to obey the command of Christ, and seek the salvation of his hearers.

Secondly: The end which faithful ministers propose to themselves, in entering into the ministry, is, to promote the salvation of souls. They undertake to preach the gospel, not of constraint, but willingly; not to gain wealth, or applause, but to gain the souls of men. They have seen their own hearts, and their perishing state by nature. They have felt their own need of a Saviour, and found the hope and relief which the gospel affords to believing, penitent, broken hearted sinners. They know, by their own experience, the perishing state of sinners, and the infinite importance of the gospel. They feel a tenderness and compassion for their fellow men. They wish to be instrumental in turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. And it is this sincere love to souls, which induces them to undertake the great and difficult work of preaching the gospel.

Now, the end which any one proposes in any employment, he naturally desires to accomplish. The faithful attorney, who undertakes his calling to maintain justice between man and man, always pursues this object, in all his pleas and exertions. And the faithful physician, who practices the healing art, to cure the disorders and preserve the lives of his fellow men, always seeks the life and health of his patients. So a faithful minister, who enters upon his work from the pure motives of benevolence and compassion, will always aim, in all his preaching, to save the souls of his hearers. As soon as Paul was converted he wished to convert others. And, therefore, as soon as he was called to preach, he instantly obeyed the call. "But when it pleased God," says he, "who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me, by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." It was love to souls which induced Paul to preach, and this love constrained him to seek the salvation of his hearers. And all, who enter into the ministry from the same motive, uniformly pursue the same end. They carry about with them, and especially into the pulpit, a sincere and ardent desire to save the souls of men. Like Paul, they travail in birth for souls; and, like him, their heart's desire and prayer to God is, that sinners, through their preaching, may be saved.

Thirdly: Faithful ministers desire to fulfil the weighty obligations which are laid upon them, when the souls of men are

committed to their care and instruction. Then they are charged to take heed unto themselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers, to "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Yea, they are charged before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom, to preach the word; to be instant in season and out of season; to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. Under the impression of these obligations, they maintain an habitual sense that they watch for souls as those who must give account. And this creates in them an ardent desire to fulfil the ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus, and to promote the salvation of those whom he hath committed to their trust, and for whom he hath suffered and died.

Fourthly: Faithful ministers place their own happiness in the salvation of their people. They often look forward, and anticipate the joy of meeting those whom they may be instrumental of saving, at the right hand of Christ. And they can hardly form an idea of a greater satisfaction than this. Paul frequently mentions the pleasure which he anticipated in seeing the fruit of his labors in the salvation of souls. He says to the Corinthians, "As ye also have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus." Again, he exhorts the Philippians to live a holy and exemplary life, giving this as the reason, "that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." In another place he calls them his "joy and crown." And "what," says he, to the Thessalonians, "is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" Thus Paul placed his own happiness in the salvation of his hearers; which enabled him to say with sincerity to the Jew, that he desired to gain the Jew; to the Gentile, that he desired to gain the Gentile; to the weak, that he desired to gain the weak; and to the Corinthians, that he sought not theirs, but them. He considered every person whom he was instrumental of converting, as a part of his future and eternal reward, and therefore most sincerely desired, in his preaching, to save the souls of men. As God had expressly given him those who once sailed with him, so he expected that he would give him all whom he should ever be instrumental of turning from darkness to light. And all faithful ministers have the same glorious recompense of reward set before them, to stimulate their desires and endeavors to promote the salvation of their hearers. The more they turn to righteousness, the brighter will they shine,

and the more completely happy they will be, in the kingdom of glory. Their happiness will be eternally augmented, by the salvation of their people. This powerful motive is peculiar to faithful ministers, and inspires them with peculiar zeal to win souls. I may add,

Fifthly: Faithful ministers desire to convert and save sinners, for the honor of Christ. They consider themselves as his servants, whose business it is to promote his glory, in the salvation of souls. So Paul represents himself and his brethren in the ministry: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." There is no other way in which ministers can serve and glorify Christ so much, as by promoting the salvation of sinners, and increasing the number of his cordial subjects. Every convert is translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. Believers are called the glory of Christ; and in seeing them, he is said to see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. They were the joy set before him, in the view of which he despised the shame, and endured the pains of the cross. Believers, who have been redeemed by his blood, and converted by his gospel, shall be presented before him, in all the beauties of holiness, "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." When all the vessels of mercy shall be collected, and seated at the right hand of Christ, they will reflect peculiar honor and glory upon him; and shine to the praise of the glory of his grace, in the eyes of all the intelligent creation. This faithful ministers desire to see and enjoy; and therefore when they preach, they desire to win souls to Christ, that he may receive the reward of his sufferings, and enjoy the travail of his soul, in the holiness, happiness and praises of those who were given unto him before the foundation of the world. These are some of the plain and solid reasons, why faithful ministers desire to promote the salvation of their hearers. It now remains only to improve and apply the subject, agreeably to the present serious and important occasion.

1. If faithful ministers have a desire to promote the salvation of souls, then this desire must have great influence upon all parts of their ministerial conduct. To desire the salvation of souls is to desire their future and eternal good. This great and extensive desire, therefore, must naturally lead the minds of ministers to view their people in the light of eternity. And this view of their people must necessarily raise them all to a level. I do not say sink them to a level, but raise them to a level; because it always raises men, even the smallest and lowest men, to view them in relation to eternity. In this view, all

souls are equal. The soul of the child is equal to the soul of the parent; the soul of the subject is equal to the soul of the ruler; the soul of the servant is equal to the soul of the master; and the soul of the poor is equal to the soul of the rich. Eternity levels all distinctions, and raises all immortal souls into infinite importance. One soul, in the view of eternity, appears of more worth than the whole world. "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" While a minister has such a view of the equal worth of every soul, he will neither aim to flatter the rich, nor please the learned; but endeavor to preach with that plainness and impartiality which is directly calculated to promote the salvation of every one of his hearers.

Again: This desire to save souls will excite a minister to great diligence and activity in his sacred office. When any one object absorbs the attention and affections of the mind, it always makes a man zealous. So when the salvation of his hearers absorbs the affections and attention of a minister, it never fails to fire him with zeal in their service, and constrains him to sacrifice his own ease, reputation and interest, for their eternal good. He feels that there is nothing of his too great to be given up, for the salvation of his people. Paul's desire to save souls inspired him with astonishing zeal and self denial. To attain this desirable and invaluable object, he spared no pains, he feared no reproaches, and he shunned no dangers, nor persecutions. He was always ready to spend and be spent in preaching the gospel, and promoting the salvation of sinners. "Yea," says he to the Philippians, "if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." And every minister who feels this benevolent and compassionate desire for the salvation of souls, will cheerfully employ his time, exhaust his strength, and wear out his life, in the service of his people.

Besides: This desire will constrain him to preach in the most profitable manner. It will make him speak like a dying and accountable creature, to dying and accountable creatures. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, and realizing the scenes of eternity, he will deliver his discourses with such a tenderness and solemnity, as can scarcely fail of persuading his hearers to secure their eternal interest. It will direct him to use a plain and familiar style, and to construct his discourses so as to enlighten and convince, rather than so as to soothe and please his people. He will speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth his heart. He will preach such doctrines, and only such, as he verily believes will appear to be true at the last day. And these

he will preach without the least ambiguity or disguise. He will mean to preach the whole counsel of God, and to keep back nothing which he conceives would be profitable to his people. And he will plainly and faithfully warn his hearers against every thing which he apprehends will appear to be an error, a delusion, or a moral evil, at the day of judgment. In a word, a desire to save souls, will make him constantly solicitous to live and preach in such a manner as to become a sweet savor to God, in them that are saved and in them that perish.

2. If faithful ministers desire the salvation of souls, then their work is extremely great and arduous. It is a work which creates constant care and concern, and fills their minds with great anxiety and distress. They carry all their people upon their hearts, and feel interested in every thing which affects their temporal and eternal interest. Their cares are as numerous and as weighty as the souls committed to their trust. If any of their people are careless and secure; if any neglect public worship or family prayer; if any run into dangerous errors and delusions; if any fall into animosities and contentions; or if any practice infamous and destructive vices; it wounds and grieves their hearts. For all such things among their people threaten to destroy their souls, which they most earnestly desire to prevent. Paul often tells his hearers how much he carried them upon his heart. To the Philippians he says, "God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." He tells the Thessalonians, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail." How tender is his appeal to the Corinthians! "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" And to the same persons he expresses his paternal care and concern. "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not yours but you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." This was a truly paternal affection. Parents never lose their love nor care for their children, though ever so ungrateful and disobedient. So faithful ministers never cease to care for their people, but feel their anxiety and concern increase, as any of them appear to wax worse and worse. Like their blessed Master, they are grieved for the hardness of men's hearts; and like his faithful apostle, they warn every one night and day with tears. Cares are the

heaviest burdens in life. And these fall with heavier weight upon pious ministers, than upon any other men in the world.

3. If faithful ministers desire to promote the salvation of souls, then they stand in great need of the prayers of the people of God. They desire and pursue an object which it is out of their power to attain. They may plant and water, but they cannot give the increase. They may pray and preach with the most earnest desire for the good of souls, but it is beyond their reach to convert a sinner from the error of his way, or to save a soul from death. They may labor in vain, and spend their strength for nought, unless God opens the hearts of their people to embrace the truth. This they most sensibly feel, and, therefore, most earnestly desire the prayers of saints, that they may be enabled to preach both faithfully and successfully. Paul solicited the prayers of the godly, with great importunity. "Brethren, pray for us." "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." Again, "Pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." Those ministers who preach with a desire to save the souls of men, always preach those truths which are disagreeable to the human heart, and which naturally excite the enmity and opposition of sinners. Such preachers, therefore, more especially need the prayers of their pious people, and more earnestly desire them. They feel that he that planteth, and he that watereth, is nothing; and therefore they look to God, and desire others to look to God, to give the increase.

4. If faithful ministers desire to promote the salvation of souls, then they are worthy of peculiar respect. They are sincere friends to mankind. They are heartily concerned and engaged to promote the highest good of their fellow creatures. And such men, if any in the world, deserve respect and esteem. Does the defender of our rights, the protector of our property, or the preserver of our lives, command our esteem and respect? and shall not the friend of our souls be an object of our veneration and respect? No men really merit the affectionate esteem of the world, more than those who faithfully, laboriously and anxiously watch for their souls. Hence, says the apostle to the Thessalonians, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." Could the people look into the hearts of their faithful ministers, and see their heavy cares and their longing desires

for the salvation of their souls, they would be constrained to revere, esteem and respect them.

5. If faithful ministers sincerely desire, and labor to promote the salvation of their people; then their people are bound in gratitude as well as equity to give them a comfortable support. If they are willing to spend and be spent for the spiritual and eternal good of their people, then their desires and labors merit an ample reward; nor can their people have the least reason to desire to withhold it. They ought to feel a pleasure in supporting those who are seeking their best interest both in time and eternity. Paul was no hireling. He solemnly declares that he "coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel." But yet he strenuously insists upon the indispensable duty of men, to support their ministers. I will read a passage of his, which ought to be written, as with the point of a diamond, upon every hearer's heart. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written; that he that ploweth should plow in hope, and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

6. If faithful ministers sincerely desire to promote the salvation of souls; then it is extremely criminal for any to despise and oppose them in their great and good design. Mankind have always shown a strange propensity to despise and oppose the ambassadors of God. And never was there a time, perhaps, when this malignant disposition was more visible in this land than at the present day. A loose and infidel spirit prevails more or less every where, and especially appears in opposition to faithful ministers. Those who are enemies to God, to the Bible, to religion, and to all righteousness, point their virulence at the clergy; and seem determined to obstruct and defeat all their exertions to defend the gospel, and promote

religion. But how extremely base and ungrateful is their conduct! Our Lord saith to his ministers, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." Paul had occasion to paint the malignity and opposition of infidels in the blackest colors. And his description will suit all who are, at this day, opposing the pious exertions of ministers, and the saving effects of the gospel. Paul and Barnabas having preached to Sergius Paulus, Elymas the sorcerer withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. "Then Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes upon him, and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness; wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Such is the base, the ungrateful, the diabolical disposition, that prompts men to oppose a benevolent gospel, and a pious ministry. Can any thing be more criminal in the sight of God, or call louder for the severe and swift execution of his wrath? And who ever hardened themselves against God, and prospered? Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.

7. If faithful ministers desire the salvation of souls; then those who are destitute of this desire, are really unfaithful in the sight of God, and unqualified for their sacred office. A sincere desire to save the souls of men, stamps the character of a faithful minister; and neither genius, nor learning, nor eloquence, nor the greatest pulpit talents, can supply the want of this desire. Let us, then, my brethren, examine the feelings of our hearts, and the real motives of our conduct, in preaching the gospel. Have we sincerely desired to promote the salvation of our people? Have we carried them upon our hearts? Have we experienced the pleasures and the pains of faithful ministers? Have we rejoiced in the appearance of the awakening, conviction, and conversion of sinners? Have we rejoiced in the apparent prosperity of Christ's kingdom? And, on the other hand, have we been in heaviness and sorrow, for the secure, the thoughtless, the impenitent, and hardened, among our people? Can each of us say to his flock, as Paul said to his hearers, "I seek not yours but you?" If we can sincerely say this, we have the witness in ourselves that we are faithful.

8. If faithful ministers sincerely desire to promote the salvation of souls; then they are more likely to be successful in their work than others. Their desires, their prayers, and their exertions, must be pleasing to God, and have a moral tendency to draw down a blessing upon their labors. A very pious and successful minister of the last century said that, so far as his observation extended, not the most learned, most eloquent, or most

studious ministers, were the most successful; but those who were the most *desirous* of success. It is said of Barnabas, that he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added to the Lord." Pious ministers, who are full of love, faith and zeal in the cause of Christ, have peculiar reason to hope that God will give them the desire of their hearts, in the salvation of their people. But though this desire should not be granted them, they may rest satisfied that their desires and exertions shall not be lost, but shall secure the approbation of God, in the day when they must give an account of their stewardship. This is a sufficient encouragement to persevere in well doing, for in due season they shall reap if they faint not. Under the impression of this thought, I would now turn my discourse to him who is about to devote himself to the service of souls.

Dear Sir, — Behold the people now to be committed to your trust. Do you feel compassion for their precious souls? Is your spirit stirred within you, as Paul's was when he saw the Athenians in their perishing condition? Is it your heart's desire to be made the humble and happy instrument of turning sinners to God, and of building up saints in their most holy faith? If this be your leading motive in taking the charge of this people, your undertaking is promising. This desire will have a happy influence upon all your ministerial labors. It will make you industrious in your studies, faithful in your preaching, and exemplary in all your private conduct and conversation. It will bring all your secular and personal concerns into subordination to the spiritual and eternal concerns of your people. It will save you from that undue attachment to the world and the things of the world, which is so injurious to the feelings, the character, and usefulness of ministers. It will conciliate the esteem and affections of your people, and give you a peculiar boldness and freedom in addressing them, both in public and private, upon the weighty concerns of the soul. In a word, it will prepare you to live and to die with your people; and to meet them with comfort, at the last day, whether they are saved, or whether they are lost. Be entreated, then, to examine the motives of your conduct, on the day of your consecration to your sacred office. Live under an habitual impression that you watch for souls as one who must give account. Let it be your constant desire and endeavor, from this day to the day of your death, to save both yourself and them that hear you. Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

One word to the church and people in this place, will conclude my discourse.

Brethren and Friends, — This is a serious and important day to you, as well as to him who is about to take the care of your souls. He must give an account how he feels and conducts towards you, and you must give account how you feel and conduct towards him. It is his interest to seek your good; and your interest to seek his usefulness. Your salvation is the great object to which his desires and your desires, his exertions and your exertions, ought to be directed. Be entreated, then, to assist and encourage your pastor in his great and good work. You may assist him by your prayers, and encourage him by a constant and sincere attendance on his public instructions. But if you neglect your duty as a people, while he fulfils his duty as a minister, all his prayers, and desires, and exertions, will aggravate your guilt, and ripen you for ruin. Receive the word, therefore, into good and honest hearts, that you may bring forth fruit to the glory of God, to the joy of your pastor, and to the present and future peace of your own souls. Amen.

SERMON XV.

CONFIRMATION IN THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL AN EFFECT OF DIVINE GRACE.

INSTALLATION OF REV. HOLLAND WEEKS, ABINGTON, AUGUST 9, 1815

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. — Hebrews, xiii. 9

The primitive professors of Christianity were surrounded by enemies, who wished to draw them into their own fatal errors and delusions. The Jewish Scribes and Pharisees, and the Pagan priests and philosophers, were all hostile to the doctrines of the gospel, and employed their learning and subtilty, to subvert these doctrines, and to propagate their own. The apostles, therefore, frequently wrote to those who had professed to embrace Christianity, to guard them against their erroneous enemies, who lay in wait to deceive and to destroy. Paul seldom fails in any of his epistles, to inculcate upon christians the duty and importance of keeping the faith and avoiding error. In the fifth chapter of this epistle, he reproves the Hebrews for neglecting to preserve the knowledge, which they once had, of the great truths of the gospel. "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." They had lost instead of gaining religious knowledge; which exposed them to be led astray by those who endeavored to overthrow their faith in the gospel. To secure them against this danger, he first exhorts them to remember the faith and example of their deceased teachers, who had spoken unto them the word of God; and then charges them, "Be not carried about with di-

vers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." His obvious meaning is, that grace in their hearts would preserve them from fatal errors, and effectually establish them in the essential doctrines of the gospel. The spirit of the text may be expressed in this general observation:

That the subjects of grace are established in the essential doctrines of the gospel.

I shall endeavor to show,

I. Who are the subjects of grace.

II. What are the essential doctrines of the gospel. And,

III. That the subjects of grace are established in these doctrines.

I. We are to consider who are the subjects of grace.

All men are naturally destitute of grace, and under the entire dominion of a depraved heart. In this state they remain, until they are awakened, convinced, and converted, by the special influences of the Divine Spirit. He makes them sensible of their moral corruption, sets their sins in order before them, causes them to realize their just desert of eternal destruction, and then sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts, and turns them from sin to holiness. They now become conformed to the moral image of God, reconciled to his character, to his laws, to his designs, and to the terms of salvation proposed in the gospel. Their internal views and affections are essentially changed. Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. They have a spiritual discerning of spiritual things, and love holiness in God, and in their fellow creatures. They place God on the throne, and take their proper place at his footstool. They renounce their self righteousness and self dependence, and rely alone upon Christ for pardoning mercy, and choose to be saved through the grace of the gospel. Their selfish heart, which darkened their understanding, is removed, and a pure, benevolent heart is given them, by which they discern and love the glory of God, as it is illustriously displayed in the work of redemption. This pure and holy love reigns in the hearts of all the subjects of grace, and distinguishes them from the impenitent, unbelieving world, who are dead in trespasses and sins.

II. Let us next consider what are the essential doctrines of the gospel.

All christians are agreed that the gospel contains some essential doctrines; though they are not so well agreed in drawing the line of distinction between those doctrines which are essential, and those which are not essential. Some doctrines may be called essential, because they constitute the essence of

the gospel, and are necessary to its very existence; and some may be called essential, because they must be believed and embraced, in order to salvation. It is pretty easy to determine what doctrines are essential to the existence of the gospel, and lie at the foundation of it. There are some doctrines so essential to the gospel, that if any one of them should be denied, the denial would, in its just consequences, subvert the whole plan of salvation through a Redeemer. If God had not decreed to save any of mankind, it would necessarily follow that none of mankind would be saved. If God had not decreed that a part of mankind should be saved, it would necessarily follow that a part of mankind would not be saved. If God had not decreed that his Son, the second person in the Trinity, should die to make atonement for mankind, it would necessarily follow that none of mankind would be saved through the atonement of Christ. If God had not decreed to send his Spirit to begin and carry on a work of grace in any of mankind, it would necessarily follow that none of mankind would be saved. If God had not decreed that any of mankind should become sinners, it would necessarily follow that none of mankind would need a Saviour, or could be saved through the gospel. It is now easy to see that the doctrine of moral depravity, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of saints' perseverance, the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of election, and the general doctrine of the decrees, are all absolutely essential to the gospel, and must be maintained, in order to maintain the gospel itself. For if any man can fairly disprove any one of these doctrines, he may by fair reasoning disprove all the rest. But though all these doctrines are equally fundamental to the gospel, yet they may not all be equally essential to salvation. For many persons may not understand all these doctrines, nor discern their inseparable connection, but yet may understand, believe, and love some of them, while they are ignorant of others; and this ignorance may be consistent with their final salvation. It is not, however, to my present purpose to say what doctrines a man must believe in order to be saved, but only to point out what are fundamental to the gospel, and necessary to its very existence; for it is to these doctrines that the apostle refers, in the verse which contains the text. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." There was a serious question among the Jews who were converted to Christianity, whether they might, or might not, lawfully eat those things which were prohibited by the ceremonial law. This the apostle determines to be a

non-essential point; and exhorts believers not to break charity with one another on account of such things as were neither fundamental to the gospel, nor essential to salvation. But he recommends it as a good thing, by which he means an important thing, that christians should be established in those doctrines which are essential to the gospel, and which cannot be denied and rejected, without denying and rejecting the gospel itself.

III. Having specified the essential doctrines of the gospel, it remains to show that real christians, who are the subjects of grace, are actually established in them. The apostle represents them so established, as not to be carried about by divers and strange doctrines; and this we find verified by the conduct of real saints under both the Old and New Testament. Moses was a subject of grace, and he kept the faith in the court of Pharaoh, where he was surrounded by idolators and the most artful deceivers. When religion was at the lowest ebb in Israel, there were seven thousand men of grace, who kept the faith and refused to bow the knee to the image of Baal. All the pious men in Judah kept the faith, while the ten tribes of Israel fell away, under the seduction of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego kept the faith, amidst all the threats and machinations of the enemies of truth to corrupt and destroy them. When many of Christ's professed followers went back, and walked no more with him, "Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God." Thus the apostles were established in the faith before Christ's death; and afterwards we find that not only Stephen the first martyr, and James the second, but all the rest of the apostles, except Judas the apostate, sealed their faith by their blood. And it is well known that since their day, multitudes have sacrificed their lives in testimony of the truth and importance of the essential doctrines of the gospel. All Christian martyrs might have saved their lives, if they would have only renounced the essential truths of the gospel, and embraced divers and strange doctrines. Why then did they not renounce their peculiar religious sentiments, and embraced those which would have saved their lives? No other sufficient reason can be given, but that their hearts were established with grace. These instances afford a strong presumption that good men are really established in the essential doctrines of revealed religion. And this leads me to say that they not only may be, but must be so established; for several reasons:

1. Because they know that the essential doctrines of the gos-

pel are true. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." The subjects of grace have a peculiar, certain knowledge of the essential doctrines of grace, which establishes them in the faith. All the essential doctrines of the gospel are doctrines of grace. The whole scheme of salvation was devised on purpose to display the riches of divine grace in the salvation of sinners. It was grace in God to decree to save any of our fallen race. It was grace in God to decree to send his Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. It was grace in God to send his Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify the elect, and form them vessels of mercy, and fit them for the kingdom of glory. These doctrines of grace the subjects of grace know to be true, by their own experience. They have seen their own wretchedness and guilt, and felt their need of that salvation which the gospel offers. They have been partakers of the divine nature, and possess the very same spirit of benevolence which moved God to provide a way of salvation exactly suited to their case. They know, therefore, that the doctrines of grace are true, by the effects which they have produced in their own hearts. Hence says the apostle John, "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath the witness in himself." And again he says to christians, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth; but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." Christ himself said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." All the subjects of grace, "have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that they may know the things that are freely given to them of God." According to these declarations of scripture, all christians, or subjects of grace, not only think, but know experimentally and certainly, that the essential doctrines of the gospel are true; and this knowledge must establish them in the truth. When men know any thing to be true, they cannot divest themselves of that knowledge at their pleasure, but are morally obliged to retain it. So when the subjects of grace know that the first and fundamental doctrines of the gospel are true, they must necessarily be confirmed and established in them.

2. They must be established in these doctrines, not only because they know them to be true, but because they love them. All the subjects of grace sincerely believe the gospel; and their

sincere belief of the gospel flows from love to those truths which compose the gospel, and which are its essential doctrines. We read, "Faith works by love;" and "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Saving faith essentially consists in believing and loving the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel. All the subjects of grace are true believers; and therefore it is essential to their character, that they love the gospel, and all the truths which they believe to be essential to it. Now if they not only know the essential doctrines of Christianity to be true, but also love these doctrines, then they must be established in them. The mere knowledge of the essential doctrines of the gospel will not infallibly establish men in them, unless they love them. Paul exhorts Timothy to hold faith and a good conscience; "which," says he, "some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck; of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." And Peter, speaking of false teachers who privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, observes, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Hymeneus and Alexander, and other heretics, once knew the way of righteousness; but being destitute of grace, they hated the essential doctrines of the gospel; and, therefore, in direct contrariety to the dictates of their reason and conscience, renounced the Divinity of Christ and other essential doctrines of the gospel, and so made shipwreck of their faith and good conscience. But this is never true of the subjects of grace, or real christians, who love, as well as know the great and essential doctrines of the gospel. Those who both know and love the truth, never will renounce it. They are established, and cannot be carried about with divers and strange doctrines. Agreeably to this, the apostle prays for the Ephesians, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith; that being rooted and grounded in love, they might be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God. And that they might "be no more tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive." The meaning of the apostle here is too plain to be misunderstood. He asserts that all saints, all the subjects of grace, are so filled with the fulness of God, so rooted and grounded in love to the essential doctrines of the gospel, that they cannot be tossed to and fro, nor car-

ried about with every wind of doctrine, by the most artful deceivers. They are effectually established in the truth. I may add,

3. That the subjects of grace are established in the essential doctrines of the gospel, because they not only know and love them, but feel the infinite importance of them. They sensibly realize that the whole weight of their salvation depends upon their holding fast the form of sound words, and maintaining the great truths upon which they have founded all their future and eternal hopes. Paul had such a deep sense of the importance of the essential doctrines of the gospel, which he believed, and loved, and preached to others. Hear how feelingly he speaks to Timothy upon this interesting subject. "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God; who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel; whereunto I am appointed a preacher and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." The gospel is the only possible way of salvation for guilty and perishing creatures. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." All the subjects of grace see and feel that their eternal interests are suspended upon their believing and loving the essential doctrines of the gospel; and therefore they can no more be moved to disbelieve, deny and give up these doctrines, than they can be moved to give up the salvation of their souls. They can adopt the language of the apostle: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say

to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Thus those who love God, who love the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and second person in the Trinity; and who love the doctrine of the divine decrees, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of justification through the atonement of Christ, and the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints; are immovably established in these essential doctrines of the gospel, and cannot be carried about with divers and strange doctrines, either by the great deceiver, or any of his instruments, who lie in wait to deceive. I now proceed to improve the subject, by pointing out several important truths which seem naturally to flow from it.

1. If the subjects of grace are established in the essential doctrines of the gospel, then it is easy to distinguish religious orthodoxy from religious heterodoxy. Many, at this day, presume to condemn and ridicule both these terms as insignificant and unintelligible. But if there be any essential doctrines of the gospel, in which all real christians are united and established, then orthodoxy consists in believing and maintaining these essential doctrines of the gospel; and heterodoxy consists in disbelieving, denying and opposing these same doctrines. Orthodoxy and heterodoxy are terms full of important meaning, which real christians can easily understand and distinguish. They know what it is to believe and profess the essential doctrines of the gospel, and what it is to disbelieve and deny these doctrines; they can, therefore, easily distinguish those who are orthodox from those who are heterodox. Orthodoxy and heterodoxy are terms which have been used in the Christian church for more than eighteen hundred years. Those christians who have been established in the essential doctrines of the gospel, have called themselves orthodox, and called others, who denied and opposed these doctrines, heterodox. And though the heterodox have disliked this distinction, and left no methods unemployed to explode it, yet the distinction, and the terms which mark it, are still known and kept up, through the Christian world. To deny that there is any such thing as orthodoxy, in distinction from heterodoxy, is to deny that there are any essential doctrines of the gospel, in distinction from non-

essential ones; which is virtually to deny the gospel itself. There is no real difference between a heretic and an infidel. The infidel disbelieves and denies the divine inspiration of the gospel; and the heretic disbelieves and denies the essential doctrines of the gospel; which subverts it to all intents and purposes. We seldom hear any but unbelievers and heretics condemn and ridicule the words orthodoxy and heterodoxy; for those who know and love the essential doctrines of the gospel, realize the solemn importance of the distinction denoted by these terms.

2. If the subjects of grace are established in the essential doctrines of the gospel, then real christians see the propriety and importance of forming and subscribing creeds, or confessions of faith. They know that there are essential doctrines of the gospel; they know that these doctrines can be ascertained and defined; and they know that, when they are ascertained and defined, and thrown into the form of a creed, they are the only proper test of orthodoxy. They know that the Bible is no proper test of men's religious sentiments; for men may profess to believe the Bible, while they disbelieve, deny and oppose all the essential doctrines contained in it. Hence they see the propriety and importance of a more definite criterion of orthodoxy. They wish to know whether those with whom they join in Christian communion, are really united with them in the belief of the great and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, upon which they build all their own hopes of salvation. They cannot see how a gospel church can be formed upon a consistent and permanent foundation, unless they adopt some form of sound words, and bind themselves to abide by it. This has been the general opinion of orthodox christians ever since the primitive days of Christianity; and they have carried their opinion into practice. They have made use of formulas, creeds, and confessions of faith, to distinguish themselves not only from Pagans, Jews, and Infidels, but from all corrupt sectarians or heretics. Creeds have not been the means of making infidels and heretics, but only the means of preserving the pure part of the Christian church from their contagious and destructive influence. Those who are established in the essential doctrines of the gospel, are not ashamed to profess them before the world, nor afraid to bind themselves to believe them, as long as they live, and as long as they exist. For though they are sensible that they may see good reasons to alter their opinions respecting some of their present religious sentiments, yet they absolutely know that they never can see good reasons to alter their belief of the essential doctrines of the gospel. They know that by subscribing an orthodox creed, they do not

bind themselves never to grow wiser; but only never to grow wiser than what is written in the sacred oracles of truth. Accordingly, we very seldom hear those complain of orthodox creeds, who really believe and love the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which are contained in them.

3. If the subjects of grace are established in the doctrines of the gospel; then they are constrained to consider men's religious sentiments as a test of their religious character. While christians judge of their own religious character by their belief and love of the essential doctrines of the gospel, they must, to be consistent, judge of other men's religious character by the same criterion. If they see no way to become truly pious themselves, but by believing and loving the essential doctrines of the gospel, they cannot see any way how others should become truly pious, but by believing and loving the same essential truths. The subjects of grace, who are established in the essential doctrines of the gospel, act perfectly consistent with themselves, and with the Bible, in making religious sentiments the test of religious character. The Bible represents faith as one criterion of religious character. Our Saviour said to the Jews, "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." He declared, and required his ministers to declare, that "he that believeth not shall be damned." And Paul declares that those who do not believe nor love the truth, but believe a lie, shall be damned. It is altogether reasonable and scriptural for orthodox christians, to judge of men's religious character by their religious sentiments. To disbelieve and oppose the essential doctrines of the gospel, is as real an evidence of a corrupt heart as disobedience to any divine commands. But those who complain of orthodox creeds and confessions of faith, equally complain of orthodox christians, for judging of their Christian character, by their open and avowed religious sentiments. They represent this mode of judging as uncandid, unchristian, censorious, and next to blasphemous. They do not consider that, in so saying, they give a striking evidence that they have an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the essential doctrines of the gospel. If any one is now disposed to ask, Who made you a judge of other men's hearts? I answer, He who required me, and all christians, to judge a tree by its fruit. Heresy, or the disbelief and denial of the essential doctrines of the gospel, is the fruit of a corrupt heart. It is readily acknowledged that those who deny that there are any essential doctrines of the gospel, may consistently exercise charity towards all men, whether orthodox or heterodox; but those who believe that there are essential doctrines of the gospel, cannot consist-

ently extend their charity to those who deny them. And if those who call themselves catholic, were really so, they would approve and applaud the orthodox for their consistent, though not universal catholicism.

4. If ministers of the gospel are established in the great and fundamental doctrines of it; they will not fail to preach those doctrines to their people. They will not be wavering and unsettled in their religious sentiments. They will not think the doctrines upon which they build their own hopes of salvation, are unprofitable to their hearers. They will love to preach the most important truths, rather than any others; and desire to make their people understand them, and feel the weight and importance of them. For this purpose, they will preach them plainly. If they preach upon moral depravity, they will explain it. If they preach upon regeneration, they will explain it. If they preach upon the divine decrees, they will tell what they mean. If they preach upon the great and essential doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity, they will explain what can be explained, and place the mystery where it ought to be placed, not in respect to the three divine Persons, but in respect to the unity of these in the Godhead. If they preach upon the operations of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men, they will explain these operations, and the effects which flow from them. Indeed, whatever essential doctrine they preach, they will explain. It is one thing to preach about a doctrine, and another thing to explain it. But the plainness of preaching principally consists in explaining divine truths, in language easy to be understood by every hearer. It is, therefore, by a clear manifestation of the truth, that ministers must effectually commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Again: If ministers are established in the essential doctrines of the gospel, they will preach them fully as well as plainly. They will not shun to declare all the counsel of God, but unfold all the first principles of the gospel. They will aim to exhibit the harmony, connection and consistency of the various parts of the great plan of redemption, as it was concerted, adjusted and established in the Divine Mind from eternity. They will endeavor to make their people know as much about all the doctrines which God has revealed, as they are able to teach them.

And farthermore: They will preach the fundamental doctrines of the gospel not only plainly and fully, but constantly. Gospel duties cannot be separated from gospel doctrines. Practical preaching is founded upon sentimental. Christian duties must be traced to Christian principles; and therefore these must always be brought into view, in treating upon

every subject. In a word, if ministers of the gospel know the grace of God in truth, they will preach the great and essential truths of the gospel plainly, fully, constantly and practically; which will directly tend to quicken, comfort and edify Christians, and to awaken, convince, and convert sinners.

5. If the doctrines which have been mentioned are essential and important, then a people have no reason to complain of their minister for preaching them, as plainly and fully as he can. If he finds them revealed in the gospel, and feels the importance of them in respect both to himself and his hearers, he is morally obliged to exhibit them, without the least ambiguity or disguise. If he seeks to please man, rather than God, he will certainly displease both God and the friends of God. It is extremely unkind and unreasonable for his people to become his enemies, because he tells them the truth. But so unkind and unreasonable have sinners always been, under the plain and faithful preaching of the peculiar and essential doctrines of the gospel. This was the case in the days of Christ. His plain and pungent preaching excited the bitter and mortal enmity of the enemies of all righteousness. Only for preaching the doctrine of divine sovereignty in saving one sinner, and leaving another to perish, the exasperated hearers attempted to push him headlong down an awful precipice. While the apostles preached the same important truths which he preached, they met with the same opposition from an unbelieving and frowning world. And this was what Christ forewarned them, and all his faithful ministers in time to come, to expect, from a faithful discharge of their sacred office. Nor have they been often agreeably disappointed. The offence of the cross has not yet ceased. The fundamental doctrines of the gospel are still offensive to the depraved heart; and much oftener produce hatred, than love, to those who preach the preaching which God bids them.

But we hope better things of the people in this place, who have long been taught the great and precious doctrines of grace, by their late deceased and beloved Pastor; who was one of the most luminous, the most penetrating, the most instructive, the most energetic, the most fervent and successful preachers of the present day. Many, I trust, have been taught of God, and are become established in the essential doctrines of the gospel, and desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow in knowledge and in holiness, until they come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, and will be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and

cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. And those who have not received the grace of God in truth, it may be rationally expected, will no more make such objections to the great and essential doctrines of the gospel, as they have so often heard completely refuted. God can easily cause the good seed which has been sown in their understandings, to spring up in their hearts, and bring forth abundantly the fruits of holiness. The field here has been excellently cultivated and prepared, and he who is to enter into another man's labors, will have the fairest opportunity and encouragement to reap a plentiful harvest, and gather fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. I am well persuaded that the pastor elect is established in the great, distinguishing and precious truths of the gospel. He is no novice, but has for years labored industriously and successfully in the vineyard of Christ. But considering the corruption of the human heart, he will feel the importance of taking heed how he preaches. Like the royal preacher, let him seek to find out acceptable words, and speak the truth in love. And may He, who has greatly blessed his ministerial labors, continue to smile upon him, and crown his labors among this people with abundant success.

SERMON XVI.

BOLDNESS OF FAITHFUL PREACHERS.

INSTALLATION OF REV. THOMAS WILLIAMS, FOXBOROUGH, NOVEMBER 6, 1816.

And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak.—Eph. vi. 19, 20.

Though Paul was a man of genius, of learning, and of eloquence, yet, with all these accomplishments, he felt himself unequal to the arduous and sacred work in which he had been engaged. He had met with great opposition from the Jew and from the Greek, from the learned and the unlearned, while preaching the gospel as he verily thought he ought to preach it. He therefore desires the saints at Ephesus, that, while praying for themselves and other christians, they would also pray for him, that he might be enabled and disposed to preach the gospel with proper freedom, plainness and boldness. Such feelings and desires were not peculiar to the apostle, but are common to all who mean to preach the gospel faithfully. This warrants us to say,

That faithful ministers, who feel that they ought to preach the gospel boldly, desire christians to pray for them. It is proposed to show,

I. That faithful ministers feel that they ought to preach the gospel boldly. And,

II. Why they desire christians to pray for them.

I. That faithful ministers feel that they ought to preach the

gospel boldly, will appear, in the first place, if we consider that they really believe the gospel is true.

The apostles and primitive preachers of the gospel had both a speculative and experimental belief of its truth and divinity. Paul says to the Corinthians, "Brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand." "For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." To the Galatians he says, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel that was preached of me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man; neither was I taught it; but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it; and profited in the Jews' religion above many, my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." And to Timothy he says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." When Christ put this question to his disciples, "Whom say ye that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." When some of his disciples went back and walked no more with him, "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter, and Paul, and all the apostles had a firm and unwavering faith in the truth and divinity of the gospel; and under the impression of such a faith, they felt that they ought to preach it boldly. This they declare was the motive which morally obliged them, not only to preach, but to preach with confidence. "We, having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believe, and

therefore have I spoken, we also believe and therefore speak." And those who heard them preach after the day of Pentecost, ascribed their zeal, animation and intrepidity, to their belief of the gospel and warm attachment to Christ. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." As all faithful ministers have been with Jesus, imbibed his spirit, and felt the transforming influence of his gospel upon their hearts, so they believe, and are sure, that it is divinely true. They believe it, not only on the ground of miracles, and prophecies, and other external evidence; but upon internal evidence, or the saving effects which it has produced in their minds. And while they have the witness in themselves of the truth and divine glory of the gospel, they are constrained to feel that they ought to preach it, and to preach boldly. Men are apt to speak with confidence what they confidently believe to be true. And as faithful ministers confidently believe the gospel to be a system of divine truth, so they feel divinely authorized to preach it with great freedom and boldness.

2. Their knowledge, as well as belief of the gospel, carries conviction to their minds that they ought to preach it boldly.

While Paul was under the dominion of an evil heart of unbelief, his understanding was darkened, and he continued grossly ignorant of the great and benevolent design of the gospel. But after his heart was renewed, and the eyes of his understanding were opened, he was prepared for those clear and extensive views of the whole plan of salvation which God designed to give him, and which qualified him to do more signal services in the church than any other of the apostles. This he gratefully acknowledged as a peculiar favor to him, as well as to the church of Christ. "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles; if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given to you-ward, how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Here the apostle declares that he had a full

and distinct knowledge of the whole scheme of salvation, as it originally lay in the divine mind from eternity, and as it was clearly revealed in the gospel. This plan of salvation he calls a mystery; because, from the beginning of the world to this day, it was obscured and wrapt up in darkness by the rites and ceremonies of former dispensations, which it was his appropriate business to unfold, explain and inculcate. Favored with such clear and extensive views of the great and glorious design of the gospel, he considered it as a privilege, as well as duty, to preach it boldly. He entreats christians, therefore, that they would pray for him, that utterance might be given him, that he might open his mouth boldly, in making known the mystery of the gospel, and preach it as he ought to preach it. He saw so much of the wisdom, and grace, and glory of the gospel, that he ardently desired to make all men see the same great and glorious truths which he saw, loved and admired in the astonishing plan of salvation. And all faithful ministers, in whose hearts God has shone, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, feel obliged and disposed to preach the gospel boldly. They have not only an experimental, but in some measure, a theological and systematical knowledge of the way of salvation. They are able to explain the nature and design of the gospel, and the various doctrines which compose it, and the various duties which flow from its doctrines, and the mutual harmony and connection which runs through the whole scheme of redemption. And the more clearly and fully they understand the gospel, the more forcibly they feel their indispensable obligation to preach it boldly. Men are never afraid to speak boldly upon subjects which they are conscious that they thoroughly understand. Those ministers, therefore, who are conscious that they clearly understand and love the design, the doctrines and the duties of the gospel, will never be afraid, nor ashamed to declare the whole counsel of God, nor to preach any doctrine or duty of Christianity boldly as they ought to preach it.

3. Faithful ministers feel the sacred obligation of their sacred office, to preach the gospel boldly.

They are the appointed stewards of the mysteries of God; and it is always required of stewards, that a man be found faithful. But how can they be faithful stewards of the mysteries of God, unless they plainly and boldly unfold and make known these mysteries? They are ambassadors of Christ, and are bound to be faithful to him who appointed them. But how can they faithfully discharge this solemn and important trust, unless they boldly preach Jesus Christ and him crucified, and all the doctrines and duties which he has commanded them to

preach? Paul felt his obligation as an ambassador, and desired christians to pray for him, that he might be a bold and faithful one. "Pray for me, that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak." He felt that he could not be a faithful ambassador of Christ, unless he boldly and plainly made known the mystery of the gospel, and explained and inculcated those important truths which had been so beneficial to himself and to others. Accordingly, he often appealed to those who had heard him preach, whether he had not given evidence of his fidelity, by preaching the gospel plainly and boldly. He says to the Galatians, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? for if I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ." He says to the Corinthians, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." And in his farewell address to the elders of Ephesus, he says, "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." He knew, and believed that others knew, that he had been a faithful ambassador of Christ, because he had preached the gospel boldly, and as he felt he ought to preach it. All faithful ministers feel the same obligation, as ambassadors of Christ, to preach the gospel boldly. And though they sometimes wish to excuse themselves from preaching some disagreeable and unpopular doctrines, yet they can find no excuse that will bear examination; but after all, feel that they ought to open their mouths boldly, in explaining, proving and inculcating the first principles and self denying duties of the gospel. But to feel their obligation to this duty is one thing, and to fulfil it is another. This leads me to show as proposed,

II. Why they desire christians to pray for them that they may preach the gospel boldly, as they feel in conscience bound to preach it.

1. Here the first reason that occurs is, because they are sensible of their own insufficiency to surmount the difficulties that

they expect to find in their way of preaching the gospel with Christian freedom and confidence.

Our Saviour taught the first preachers of the gospel to expect peculiar trials and difficulties. "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." This prediction all the apostles found to be true, by painful experience. But no man, perhaps, was ever exposed to greater dangers and sufferings, than the apostle Paul experienced in consequence of preaching the gospel boldly as he ought to preach it. And no preacher more sincerely and frequently desired christians to pray for him. How tenderly did he address the christians at Rome on this subject. "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted of the saints." While in bonds, he entreats the christians at Ephesus to pray for him, that liberty and utterance may be given him, to open his mouth boldly in making known the mystery of the gospel. In his first epistle to the Thessalonians, he says, "Brethren, pray for us." And in his second epistle he repeats his request. "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." Though faithful ministers, at this day, have not the same dangers and difficulties to experience that the apostle and primitive preachers of the gospel had to meet and surmount; yet the gospel and human heart are still at variance, and the offence of the cross has not entirely ceased. Even now ministers have to set their faces as a flint, to deny themselves, to take up the cross, and resist both the smiles and frowns of the world, so long as they plainly and boldly preach the truth as it is in Jesus. This is a dangerous situation; and naturally tends to turn them aside from the path of duty, to lead them to prophesy smooth things, and to handle the word of God deceitfully. In the view of such impediments to duty, they dare not trust in their own hearts, nor lean to their own understandings. They are deeply sensible that they are not sufficient of themselves to think or speak as they ought, but their sufficiency is of God. Under these impressions, they ardently desire christians to pray for them, that, as their days, their duties, and their trials are, so their strength may be. They confidently believe that the effectual, fervent prayers of the

righteous will avail much, and draw down divine aid in their great and arduous work. They know that God can take away the fear of man, and give them a mouth and wisdom, which none can gainsay or resist. They therefore earnestly desire that christians would pray without ceasing for them, that when they are weak, then they may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

2. They desire christians to pray for them, because they feel their own insufficiency to preach the gospel successfully. Though they should preach the truth plainly and boldly as they ought to preach it, yet they cannot command success. They can only speak to the ear; they cannot speak to the conscience or to the heart. Paul freely acknowledges, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So, then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." He tells the Galatians, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." He was duly sensible that it depended upon a divine influence, whether his preaching should be a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death to his hearers; which gave him a humiliating idea of his own insufficiency to preach the gospel successfully, and made him exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Christ and the apostles bestowed a great deal of labor in vain upon multitudes, who heard them preach the truth in the plainest and boldest manner. And their successors in the ministry very often bestow a great deal of labor in vain, upon their stated hearers. They may preach Sabbath after Sabbath, and even year after year, without apparently converting a single sinner from the error of his way. It absolutely depends upon the special grace of God, whether the best preaching shall be crowned with success. This idea habitually impresses the minds of faithful ministers, and excites an ardent desire that christians would pray for them, that God would enable them not only to preach the gospel boldly but successfully, and give them many souls as the seals of their ministry, and crowns of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

In the view of this subject, we may, in the first place, see one reason why the preaching of the gospel makes no deeper and better impression upon the minds of those who hear it at the present day. The apostles preached the gospel with great success among both Jews and Gentiles. They converted myriads and myriads to the Christian faith, and planted many large and flourishing churches in almost every quarter of the world. The preaching of those twelve men produced much greater and better effects than the preaching of a thousand ministers in these later times. To what cause should we as-

cribe this great difference between the past and present effects of preaching the gospel? Must we not ascribe it partly to the peculiar mode of the apostles' preaching? They always preached boldly, though not always successfully; but yet their success is not unfrequently ascribed to their boldness. As soon as Paul was converted, we read that "he preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." When he first went to Jerusalem, after his conversion, we are told, "he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus." It seems that his bold preaching produced great and saving effects in Judea, Galilee and Samaria. When he and Barnabas came to Iconium, "they both went together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." It is added, "Long time, therefore, abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord." At Ephesus, "Paul went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months." Though the success of the apostles was partly owing to their preaching boldly, yet their preaching boldly must be ascribed partly to the christians who perpetually prayed for them, that a divine blessing might accompany their bold and faithful exertions. After the council at Jerusalem had reprimanded Peter and John for preaching the gospel, and forbidden them to speak any more in the name of Jesus, they went and told their own company of believers what the chief priests and elders had said to them. And when their Christian friends heard how they had been treated, "They lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." Their prayers were effectual; for it is immediately added, "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." The boldness of the apostles, and the prayers of christians for them, contributed more to their success than all the miracles wrought in their favor. But preachers are not generally so bold, nor christians so prayerful, at this day, as they were in the primitive days of Christianity. This will sufficiently account for the want of those great and good effects, which were once produced by the bold and faithful preaching of the gospel.

Secondly: This subject teaches christians that they may do a great deal to assist their ministers in their laborious and arduous work. The primitive preachers of the gospel gratefully acknowledged that they received peculiar benefit from the aid and coöperation of their fellow christians. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, calls upon the whole church to "greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus." They assisted him in various ways, by attending upon his preaching and by

inviting others to attend upon it; by risking their own lives in defence of his; and principally by praying for him, that he might be enabled to preach both boldly and successfully. In this last way, christians at this day may greatly assist their ministers in discharging the duties of their office. They are more dependent for success in their work than other men are for success in their secular concerns. Men in their common affairs can obtain the objects of their pursuits with common assistance; but ministers cannot obtain their supreme object in preaching, without the special influence of the Divine Spirit. And there is good reason to believe that the effectual, fervent prayers of their fellow christians will avail as much to procure this assistance, and to promote their success, as their own prayers and exertions. It is generally in answer to the prayers of his people that God strengthens, emboldens, encourages, and succeeds his faithful ministers in their great and good work. We know that it was in answer to the prayers of the church that the apostles were so remarkably assisted and succeeded in preaching the gospel on the day of Pentecost. Christians, therefore, must certainly know that they can greatly assist their ministers by praying for them, that they may preach boldly as they ought to preach, and successfully as they desire to preach. And they have no more right to neglect to pray for their ministers, than their ministers have to neglect to preach to them.

Thirdly: Since faithful ministers need as well as desire the prayers of their fellow christians, it is their privilege as well as duty to pray for them. They view it a privilege to pray for their own lives, and health, and peace, and prosperity; and why should they not view it a greater privilege to pray for their own spiritual nourishment and growth in grace? This they know depends upon their praying for their ministers, who are the stewards of the mysteries of God, and whose proper business it is to feed them with knowledge and understanding. If they desire to grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, then they will virtually pray for themselves, in praying for their ministers. This Christ taught his apostles and followers. "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward." Christians have reason to expect that the more sincerely and constantly they pray for their ministers, the more instructive edification and comfort they shall derive from their preaching. But if they forget, or neglect, or

refuse to pray for their ministers, they abuse a precious privilege, and injure both themselves, and those who watch for their souls.

Fourthly: Since faithful ministers desire and request the professors of religion to pray for them, they must be extremely ungrateful and inconsistent, if, instead of complying with such a reasonable desire and request, they complain of them for preaching boldly as they ought to preach. Those who profess religion are generally the first and loudest in complaining of bold and faithful preaching. The Scribes and Pharisees made the first and most bitter complaints against the plain and faithful preaching of Christ, and found much more fault with him than even publicans and sinners. When the apostles plainly and boldly preached the gospel in various parts of the world, they met with more opposition from Jews than from Gentiles. And after they had gathered large and flourishing churches, the opposition and defection of professing christians did more to obstruct the spread and success of the gospel, than the opposition and prejudices of Pagan idolaters. This was a sore trial to Paul, who laments the inconsistent conduct of the Galatians, who had once professed to love his person and preaching. He asks them, "Where is, then, the blessedness ye spoke of? for I bear you record that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" Speaking of his preaching on another occasion, he says, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." Professing christians, at this day, are often the first and fiercest to object against those who preach the gospel most plainly and boldly. Though the men of the world do really dislike such preaching, yet they are generally afraid to complain of it, until they hear and see professors of religion complain, object and oppose. But is it not extremely inconsistent and absurd for professing christians to complain of ministers for preaching the same doctrines which Christ and the apostles preached, and which they have professed to believe and love? This looks like gross hypocrisy; but there is reason to fear that real christians do sometimes fall into such inconsistency, and greatly injure the cause which they profess to promote. There is scarcely any thing more embarrassing and discouraging to faithful ministers, at the present day, than the feelings and conduct of professing christians, in respect to their

preaching plainly and boldly the first principles of the oracles of God. Though they believe the doctrine of the sacred Trinity, the doctrine of divine decrees, the doctrine of divine agency, the doctrine of moral depravity, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, the doctrine of unreserved submission, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and the doctrine of eternal rewards and punishments; yet they cannot plainly and boldly preach these great and solemn truths, without wounding the feelings and exciting the displeasure of those who call themselves christians. It must be very disheartening to faithful ministers of Christ, to be blamed, reproached and opposed, for preaching as they ought to preach; and as the good of souls requires them to preach; and as all professors of religion are bound to pray that they should preach. This spirit of opposition to divine truth, which is too visibly prevailing, not only among the men of the world, but among professing christians, bears a dark aspect upon true religion; and directly tends to stop the mouths, and weaken the hands, and discourage the hearts, of those who mean to preach the gospel boldly as they ought to preach it.

The truths which we have now exhibited will, we hope, be duly considered by those for whom this discourse is principally designed, and excite them to make some suitable reflections and resolutions on this serious occasion.

In the first place, the Pastor elect will spontaneously realize his own insufficiency for the laborious, difficult and important work, in which he has faithfully and successfully labored for a number of years, and in which he still resolves to spend his days. Though he has assiduously cultivated his superior mental powers; though he has collected a large fund of classical and theological knowledge; though he has experienced the power of religion on his own heart; though he has seen much of human nature, both in its rude and in its cultivated state; and though he has had peculiar experience in preaching the gospel; yet he is not sufficient of himself to discharge the weighty and solemn duties of the gospel ministry. This, we presume, he has most sensibly felt; and the more he realizes his constant need of divine assistance in every part of his pastoral office, the more he will sincerely desire the prayers of his people, that he may have strength, and courage, and utterance given him, to preach to them boldly and faithfully as he ought to preach. But whether the people of God remember, or forget him in their prayers, he will resolve to preach the truth and the whole truth with freedom and confidence. He will set his face as a flint, put away the fear of man which bringeth a snare, renounce self dependence, and trust in the Lord Jehovah,

in whom there is everlasting strength. He will humbly resolve to be valiant for the truth. He has come upon the stage at an awful crisis; and who knows but he is destined to do much for the propagation of the pure doctrines of the gospel, and for the refutation and suppression of enthusiasm, superstition and heresy. He has long been placed in a very instructive school; and it must be his own fault, if he have not learned wisdom, prudence, patience, humility, meekness, zeal, fortitude and fidelity, by the things which he has seen, and by the scenes through which he has been called to pass. A new field is now opening before him. Let him take courage, and renewedly devote himself to the service of God, and sincerely determine to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that his faithful labors shall not be in vain in the Lord.

The people, in this place, will now please to reflect that it is their part to pray for their minister, that his mouth may be opened, his understanding enlightened, and his holy zeal enlivened, to preach to them boldly as he ought to preach. God is about to try you again in regard to the important duty of praying for your pastor. If you have been negligent in the discharge of this duty in times past, you will resolve to be more faithful in time to come. You have good reason to believe that your chosen minister will sincerely desire your prayers for him, that he may be both faithful and successful in laboring for your good; and we charitably hope that it is your present intention and resolution to comply with his reasonable desire and just expectation. Let me, however, entreat you, as Paul did the Ephesians, to "watch thereunto with all perseverance." In this point you will be extremely apt to fail. Upon your first receiving a pastor whom you highly esteem and love, you will not forget him at the throne of grace. But there is danger of your growing gradually remiss in praying for that divine assistance to be given him, which, the longer and the more faithfully he preaches to you, he will the more ardently desire and the more sensibly need. While, therefore, the man you have chosen to watch for your souls, is now standing before you, and implicitly saying, Brethren, pray for me, that utterance may be given me, that I may preach boldly, as I ought to preach, the important and precious truths of the gospel; will you not reply from the heart, God forbid that we should cease to pray for you? Amen.

SERMON XVII.

RECONCILIATION OF SINNERS TO GOD.

ORDINATION OF REV. ZOLVA WHITMORE, NORTH GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT, SEPTEMBER 5, 1821.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God. — 2 Cor. v. 20.

Ever since mankind became disaffected to God, he has been calling upon them, in various ways, to become reconciled to him. He has called upon them to return to him, at one time by his own voice; at another, by the voice of angels; at another, by the voice of prophets; at another, by the voice of his Son; and last of all, by the voice of those whom he has sent forth "into all the world," to "preach the gospel to every creature." Hence says the apostle, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." Here one thing is implied, and another asserted. It is implied that sinners are in a state of alienation from God; and it is asserted that he intends to reconcile some to himself in time to come, as he has done in time past, by the instrumentality of his sacred ambassadors, whom he has appointed for this important purpose. The whole import of the text may be comprised in this general observation:

It is the proper business of the ministers of Christ to exhort sinners to become reconciled to God.

In order to set this subject in a proper light, it seems necessary to show that sinners are disaffected to God; then, that it is the proper business of the ministers of Christ to exhort them to become reconciled to God; and lastly, that there is a propriety in their exhorting them to such a reconciliation.

I. I am to show that sinners are disaffected to God. This is plainly supposed in the text; for if they were not disaffected to God, there would be no occasion of their becoming reconciled to him. They have not the love of God in them, but are lovers of their own selves. Their supreme love to themselves excludes every spark of supreme love to God; and constitutes that carnal mind which is enmity against God, and not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. They are as really disaffected to God, as those who first rose up in rebellion against him. They wish there were no God, and the belief of his existence gives them pain. They say unto him in their hearts, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." God describes them as ungodly, unholy, unrighteous, rebellious creatures, who would not have him to reign over them, but would fain flee out of his hands. Still they are unwilling to acknowledge that they hate their Creator, Preserver and Benefactor. But when they are constrained to look within, their hearts tell them that they have always cherished hard and unfriendly feelings towards God. They are conscious of having hard thoughts of God, for bringing them into the world in connection with Adam, who involved himself and all his posterity in sin and guilt. How many have complained that by the disobedience of one many should be made sinners! And there is no explanation of this doctrine that will satisfy their minds, or remove their complaint. They complain as much of being brought into the world depraved *by* Adam's sin, as *for* Adam's sin. It is not so much the way by which they are become sinners by Adam which makes them think hard of God, as his conduct in ordering it so that they should become sinners, by a constituted connection with their great progenitor. They are all displeased that God did not order it otherwise. They feel as though they never could forgive God for making Adam their public head, when he knew the fatal consequences which would flow from it, in this world, and in the world to come. Though secure and stupid sinners think but little about this subject; yet when they come to be awakened to realize their fallen guilty state, their hearts rise in enmity against God; because they make themselves believe that he has injured them, by

bringing them into existence under the wretched and deplorable calamity of original sin.

They are disaffected to God, not only because he has brought them into being depraved, but because he has required them, notwithstanding their depravity, to be perfectly holy, and made no allowance for their moral impotence. They admit that God might, with propriety, require angels and even Adam to be perfectly holy, while they continued in a state of innocence; but they think God is unreasonably severe in commanding them to love him with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their mind, when he knows that they have a carnal heart, which is enmity against him. They have always been displeased with the extent, strictness and spirituality of this law. In Christ's day, they endeavored to explain away its meaning. They would not believe that it required any thing more than mere external obedience. And it is extremely difficult to make them believe that God does really command them to love him supremely. But when they are convinced that the law does mean what it expressly says, or that God does require them to love him supremely, notwithstanding the total depravity of their hearts; they murmur and complain of his unreasonable and cruel severity, and compare his conduct to that of the task masters in Egypt, who required the Israelites to make brick without straw. They say that they cannot love God without a change of heart, that they cannot change their own heart, and, of course, that they cannot obey the divine law. Though, under genuine conviction, they see and feel that the law is holy, just and good, yet their hearts rise in sensible opposition to it, and they had rather perish for ever, than cordially obey it. This has been found to be true by the experience of thousands of awakened and convinced, but unrenewed sinners. When the law comes home to their conscience, they always find within them the heart of an enemy. They feel the spirit and speak the language of the slothful servant. They call God a hard master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed. They resist and rebel against the clear convictions of conscience. They cannot bear to feel the obligation, by which the law of God binds them to love him supremely, while they hate him supremely.

Not only the precept, but the penalty of the divine law, is a ground of their disaffection to God. Indeed, they would not complain so much of the precept, were it not for the penalty, which gives it an awful sanction. God commands them to love him, upon pain of his everlasting displeasure. "It is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." "The soul that sinneth it

shall die." "The wages of sin is death." The least disaffection to God is a transgression of the law of love, which threatens the least transgression with eternal death. Sinners not only think, but often say, that it is hard to obey the precept of the law, and much harder still to suffer its penalty. They are ready to ask, how it is possible for them to love God when he tells them that he feels disposed to punish them for ever for their unfriendly feelings, which they know are wrong, but which they cannot suppress; or how it is possible for them to love a damning God. Such questions as these have been seriously asked; and when asked, have clearly expressed that carnal mind which is enmity to God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.

Sinners are still more disaffected to God, when they realize not only what he has required, and what he has threatened, but what he has determined. He has told them that he has determined to save some, and not others, and will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, taking one and leaving another, according to his sovereign pleasure. They cannot support the thought that he should make such a distinction among those who are all in the same fallen, guilty state; and that he should determine, before the foundation of the world, whom he would save, and whom he would destroy. This enhances their disaffection to God, and renders him, in their view, the most odious object in the universe. They hate him more than any other, yea, more than all other beings. They are his most incorrigible and irreconcilable enemies. But yet,

II. It is the proper business of the ministers of Christ, to exhort and beseech them to become reconciled to their holy and righteous Sovereign. It is the appropriate office of ambassadors to negotiate a treaty of peace and reconciliation between contending parties. The ministers of Christ are his ambassadors, to bring God's disaffected subjects to a cordial reconciliation to him. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, says the apostle, "as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." None will doubt whether ministers ought to exhort immoral sinners to become moral; and moral sinners to read the Bible, to call upon God, and externally perform every religious duty. For it is universally allowed that the most vicious can reform, and the most irreligious can become externally religious. But many seem to doubt whether the ambassadors of Christ may go so far as to exhort all sinners to repent, and return to God, and become internally and cordially reconciled to him, by whom they stand condemned. The apostle, however, represents this to be the proper business of the ambassadors of Christ. They are to exhort sinners to reform not only externally, but internally, and

to love God for the very same things for which they have hated him. God's faithful ambassadors have always exhorted his disaffected subjects in this manner. Hear the exhortation of Moses to the congregation of Israel. "I call heaven and earth to record this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live; that thou and thy seed mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him." Hear the exhortation of Isaiah to sinners. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." This was such an exhortation, to such a sincere and cordial reconciliation to God, as would infallibly secure his pardoning mercy. Hear the exhortation of Jeremiah to the unholy and unsanctified in Israel. "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it." Hear the exhortation of Ezekiel to the sinners in Zion. "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" In the same manner the prophet Joel exhorts the same degenerate people. "Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." Let us now hear how John the Baptist exhorted sinners. "In those days," we are told, "came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea; and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Christ himself exhorted sinners in precisely the same language. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Peter said to those hardened and impenitent sinners, who had imbrued their hands in the blood of the Prince of life, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." And Paul told the elders of Ephesus, that he had made it his constant practice in preaching, to testify "both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Now if Moses and the prophets, John the Baptist, Christ and the apostles, did not mistake their office, and go beyond their duty, in exhorting sinners to repent and become cordially reconciled to God; then it is the proper business of the ministers of the gospel to exhort sinners in the same manner, at this day. They are ambassadors for Christ, as Paul was; and

it is their duty, as it was his, to say to sinners, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." It only remains to show,

III. The propriety of ministers' exhorting sinners to become cordially reconciled to God. Though God commanded the prophets, and Christ commanded the apostles, to urge sinners to become sincerely reconciled to their injured and offended Sovereign, yet many, very many, are ready to call the propriety of this mode of preaching in question. But if the divine character be perfectly holy and amiable, it will be easy to see the propriety of exhorting the most disaffected sinners to become reconciled to God. For,

1. This is their plain and indispensable duty. Their disaffection to God is altogether groundless and unreasonable. He is supremely amiable, and worthy of the supreme affection of all his intelligent creatures. The angels of light, who have always stood around his throne, and been best acquainted with his treatment of all his dutiful and undutiful subjects, have never been able to discover the least defect or moral imperfection in his character, laws, or government. Nor is it in the power of sinners themselves to discover any just ground of their disaffection to their Creator and Lawgiver. He has treated them not only as well as they have deserved, but infinitely better. For the truth of this he appeals to their own consciences. "Hear ye now what the Lord saith: Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." God never has, in a single instance, given any just occasion to sinners to become disaffected to him. Their disaffection is entirely unreasonable and criminal. And who will presume to say that it is not proper that the ambassadors of Christ should exhort and beseech them to become reconciled to God, who has never given them any just cause of disaffection? May not a child be exhorted to give up his unreasonable disaffection to his parent? May not a subject be exhorted to give up his unreasonable disaffection to his prince? Why, then, may not a sinner be exhorted to give up his unreasonable disaffection to the kind Parent of the universe? The unreasonable disaffection of sinners towards God, does not, in the least degree, destroy their obligations to love him with all their hearts. It is their indispensable duty, notwithstanding all their depravity or disaffection, to become cordially reconciled to their Creator, whom they have hated without a cause. There is, therefore, the highest

propriety in ministers of the gospel solemnly exhorting them to be reconciled to God.

2. It is proper that ministers should exhort sinners to become reconciled to God, because this is not only their duty, but their immediate duty. They have no right to persist in their unreasonable and criminal disaffection to God one day, or one moment. It is their first duty to become reconciled to God, from whom they have unreasonably revolted, and renounce their causeless disaffection. So Christ exhorted them to do. "Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." It is impossible that sinners should do any duty before they become reconciled to God; and this renders it proper and necessary that ministers should lay the axe at the root of the tree, and exhort sinners to renounce their rebellion, and immediately become reconciled to the divine character and government. Christ would not allow those whom he commanded to follow him, any time to delay. And his ambassadors ought to follow his example; and exhort sinners, without delay to become reconciled to God. Besides,

3. Ministers ought to exhort sinners to become internally reconciled, as well as externally conformed to God, because this is not only their duty, and immediate duty, but their most important duty. All their future and eternal interests are suspended upon their reconciliation to God. If they persist in their disaffection, they must finally and eternally perish. But if they renounce their disaffection, and give God the supreme affection of their hearts, they shall escape the wrath to come, and obtain eternal life. It is the proper part of an ambassador to make known the ultimatum of his commission, upon which the success of his embassy must turn. And it is the proper part of the ambassadors of Christ to make known the ultimatum of their commission, and beseech sinners to become reconciled to God, upon which their final salvation depends. It becomes them to use the same language which Paul used in preaching to sinners: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God."

I now proceed to the improvement of the subject.

1. If it be the proper business of the ministers of the gospel to exhort sinners to become immediately and unconditionally reconciled to God; then it is difficult to see how those can justify themselves, who do not discharge this duty of their office. There are not a few who are engaged in the ministry of reconciliation, and preach a great many important truths, who never exhort impenitent sinners to become immediately and unconditionally reconciled to God. And they imagine they have

good reasons to justify their mode of preaching. But it is difficult to see the force and pertinency of the reasons they offer in their self justification. Some offer one reason, and some another. Some suppose that sinners ought not to be reconciled to God, before he becomes reconciled to them. They suppose they ought not to love him, while he hates them and is disposed to punish them. They suppose that his vindictive justice is not an amiable attribute of his nature, and that sinners ought not to love him while that divine attribute stands pointed against them. They say that it is utterly impossible that they should love God, until they believe that he loves them. Then, and not till then, can he appear truly and supremely amiable in their view; and until he appears as their reconciled God, they ought not to love him, because it would be the same as to be willing to be for ever miserable. But if sinners have no just cause to be disaffected to God, then he has just cause to be disaffected to them; and if he has just cause to be disaffected to them, then they ought to love him, instead of hating him, for his disaffection towards them, and disposition to punish them. He is worthy of their love before he loves them, but they are not worthy of his love before they love him. He therefore justly requires them to be reconciled to him first. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts." It is difficult to conceive how those think themselves to be ministers of reconciliation, who teach sinners that they ought not to become reconciled to God, before he becomes reconciled to them. They are so far from being ministers of reconciliation, that they are, in reality, ministers of irreconciliation. They justify sinners and condemn God. They reverse the condition of reconciliation which God has proposed, and propose another, which it would be infinitely criminal for either party in the controversy to comply with.

There are many more, who have another excuse for not urging sinners to become immediately and unconditionally reconciled to God. Though they are loath to say that God has not a right to call upon sinners to become reconciled to him; though they are loath to say that ministers ought not to obey the instructions of him who has appointed them to their office; though they are loath to say that it is not the duty of sinners to become immediately and unconditionally reconciled to God; yet they are ready to say that they do not see how totally depraved sinners, who are laboring under the fatal calamity of original sin, can become immediately and unconditionally reconciled to God. They say that they cannot see how sinners can get rid of their old heart, before God gives them a new heart; or how they can get rid of their sinful principle, before God

gives them a holy principle; or how they can get rid of a corrupt taste, before God gives them a pure taste; or how it is naturally possible for them immediately to become reconciled to God: and for this reason, they do not think it is their duty to urge them to do a natural impossibility. This looks like a plausible excuse, and would be a solid excuse, if an old heart or a new heart were what it is here supposed to be. But the truth is, that there is no old heart, but enmity, and no new heart but love. The excuse is entirely founded in a misapprehension of moral depravity. Sinners are not involuntary in their disaffection to God, nor involuntary in becoming reconciled to him. The moral depravity of sinners is altogether voluntary; and therefore God makes no allowance for it, but commands them to renounce it entirely, and to love him immediately and supremely. Why then should ministers of the gospel make an excuse for sinners which God does not make? or why should not they exhort them to that to which he exhorts them?

It is very strange that so many ministers of Christ, whose peculiar and sacred office it is to beseech sinners to become reconciled to God, should so far mistake and neglect their duty, as to alter the terms of reconciliation; and presume to substitute others so dishonorable to God, and destructive to sinners.

2. If it be the proper business of the ministers of the gospel to negotiate a treaty of reconciliation between God and his disaffected subjects; then it is of great moment that they should well understand the ground of the controversy between the parties at variance. The controversy between God and sinners is the most serious and interesting controversy that ever existed. The ground of it lies deep. It is founded in the essential and infinite difference in the moral characters of the contending parties. The whole moral character of God is pure disinterested benevolence; but the whole moral character of sinners is pure perfect selfishness. No two things in nature are more entirely opposite to each other, than pure benevolence and pure selfishness. Sinners hate God because he is perfectly benevolent, and God hates sinners because they are perfectly selfish. It is morally impossible, therefore, that God and sinners should become cordially and mutually reconciled, unless the character of the one or the other be essentially changed. When sinners change their character, and become benevolent, then God can be reconciled to them, and they to him. Or if it were possible, (to speak with reverence,) for God to change his character and become selfish, then he could become reconciled to them, and they to him. Such a change in their characters would make them friends, as Herod and Pontius Pilate were made friends, while both retained their perfect selfishness. The controversy

between God and sinners is not like many controversies among mankind. They often contend through ignorance or prejudice; and all that is necessary to settle their controversies, in such cases, and to bring about a mutual reconciliation, is to enlighten the minds of the parties. But the controversy between God and sinners is not founded in ignorance or prejudice. God is not ignorant or prejudiced in respect to the character of sinners; and sinners are not altogether ignorant or prejudiced, in respect to the character of God; and were they ever so much enlightened respecting it, they would be more, instead of less, reconciled to him. Hence it appears, that none are properly prepared to negotiate a treaty of reconciliation between God and his disaffected subjects, who are not well acquainted with the ground of the controversy between them; and that none can be acquainted with that ground, who are not acquainted with the essential difference between benevolence and selfishness. It is well known that ministers, as well as others, differ very widely in their opinions on these important points; and of course they differ as widely in their opinions concerning the controversy between God and sinners. Ministers may be wise, and learned, and deeply versed in the general knowledge of theology, and yet grossly ignorant of the real ground of controversy between God and his rebellious subjects; and all such theologians are by no means prepared to negotiate a treaty of reconciliation between the two contending parties.

3. It appears from what has been said, that those to whom is committed the ministry of reconciliation, ought to be experimentally, as well as theoretically acquainted with the ground of controversy between God and his disaffected subjects; and to be cordially and firmly attached to his cause and interest. It is of great importance to an earthly prince, that his ambassador should be well acquainted with whatever belongs to his honor and interest; and be cordially and firmly attached to his person and government. But it is of far greater importance, that the messenger of the Lord of hosts should be on his side, and faithfully regard his honor and glory, in settling a treaty of peace and reconciliation between him and his disaffected and revolted subjects. All the ministers of the gospel are messengers of the Lord of hosts, whom he appoints to carry his terms of pardon and reconciliation to those who have transgressed his holy law and deserve to die. They may be faithful, or they may be unfaithful to the important trusts reposed in them. If they are heartily reconciled to God themselves, and sincerely approve of his terms of pardon and reconciliation to sinners, they will discharge their sacred office faithfully, and deliver his messages without the least variation or reserve. But if they are not

heartily reconciled to God themselves, and do not sincerely approve of his terms of pardon and reconciliation to sinners; they will betray their trust, and take the part of sinners in their controversy with their Maker, and justify their disaffection and rebellion against him. They will pervert the gospel they preach, or, as the apostle says, they will preach another gospel. We may trace most of the religious errors and delusions in the Christian world, up to the unfaithfulness of insincere ministers of the gospel. No men have it more in their power to devise and propagate great and fatal errors than they have; and no men have actually devised and propagated greater errors than they have devised and propagated. The false prophets under the Old Testament, and the false prophets under the New Testament, were the principal propagators of the most absurd and fatal errors in their days. And where can we now find greater errorists, than those among the professed and unfaithful ambassadors of Christ? Some say, that sinners are not disaffected to God. Some say, though they are disaffected to God, yet they ought not to be reconciled to him. Some say, that they cannot be reconciled to him upon the impracticable terms of the gospel. Some say, all will be saved, whether they comply with any terms, or not. Such are the errorists among professed preachers of the gospel, at the present day, who betray the cause of Him whom they pretend has put them into the ministry of reconciliation. Was it ever more important than it is now, for those who undertake to preach the gospel of the grace of God, to be themselves reconciled to him, and take his part in the solemn controversy between him and his disaffected subjects? They cannot feel indifferent in respect to the result of this great controversy, in which God and all his intelligent creatures will be for ever deeply interested. And Christ will not feel indifferent towards the conduct of his professed ambassadors. For he has said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

4. If those whom God employs to propose the terms of pardon and reconciliation to his disaffected subjects, are faithful to their trust, and strictly follow his instructions, they may expect to meet with the displeasure and opposition of those who reject the message of grace. The terms of reconciliation, which God proposes to sinners, are extremely disagreeable to their selfish and rebellious feelings; and for that reason, their disaffection to him turns into disaffection and opposition to his faithful ambassadors; who are supposed to be attached to his cause and interests, and hostile to theirs. And this hostility they have often expressed. The sinners in Zion often hated and openly opposed the faithful prophets in Israel. Christ, who was his

Father's ambassador, gave great offence to multitudes, who heard him preach the gospel, and faithfully deliver the messages of sovereign grace. And Paul, the ambassador of Christ, found by painful experience that he could not, with all his prudence, preach the gospel so as to please Christ, and at the same time so as to please men. He asks the Galatians, "Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be a servant of Christ." It is the proper business of an ambassador, who is appointed to negotiate a treaty of peace between two contending parties, to bring the controversy to a crisis; and as soon as he has fairly stated the ultimatum of his commission, mutual reconciliation immediately commences, or open war is proclaimed. Just so, it is the design of the faithful ambassadors of Christ, to deliver the terms of reconciliation, which God has proposed in the gospel, so plainly, so fully, and so impressively, as to bring the controversy between him and his disaffected subjects to a crisis, and produce either peace or war. Those ministers who preach the gospel plainly, fully, and faithfully, do not usually leave their people as they find them, from Sabbath to Sabbath. They either conciliate, or alienate the affections of their hearers towards their offended and injured Sovereign. They either gladly receive the word of reconciliation, or heartily oppose and reject it. And those who reject the terms of reconciliation, are always displeased with themselves, and generally displeased with those who urge and beseech them to accept such grating and humiliating terms. But though the faithful ambassadors of Christ may expect to meet with more or less opposition from the enemies of the cross, yet they may console themselves with the assurance of meeting with his gracious and final approbation. This was a source of joy and triumph to Paul and his fellow laborers in the gospel. "Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish."

5. If ministers of the gospel are sacred ambassadors who are divinely appointed to propose the terms of pardoning mercy to their people; then they ought to take heed how they hear and how they treat them. Men are never placed in a more serious and critical situation in this world, than while they are hearing the ambassadors of Christ praying and beseeching them to become reconciled to God, upon the most gracious and condescending terms. They ought to feel, and in their hearts to say to the ambassador of Christ who is sent to preach to them, as Cornelius said to Peter: "Now are we all here present before

God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." The word of reconciliation, which the ambassadors of Christ deliver, is the word of God and not the word of men, and is to be received as his word, and not as theirs. But they are not to be despised because they are men; and they cannot be despised, without despising God. "He that despiseth," says the apostle, "despiseth not man but God." An earthly prince always resents any disrespect shown to his ambassador, as shown to himself; and Christ has told the world, that he will resent disrespect shown to his ambassadors, as shown to himself. He said to his apostles for their encouragement, when he sent them forth to preach the gospel, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that depiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."

SERMON XVIII.

THE ESSENTIAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN SAINTS AND SINNERS.

INSTALLATION OF REV. THOMAS WILLIAMS, ATTLEBORO', SEPTEMBER 9, 1824.

And if thou shalt take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth. — Jeremiah, xv. 19.

Though God formed, sanctified, and ordained Jeremiah to be a prophet unto the nations, yet he met with so much opposition, reproach and strife, that he lamented his hard and unhappy lot. "Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth." Notwithstanding this bitter lamentation, God would not release him from his high and sacred office; but told him he had much more for him to do and suffer in delivering his messages to his degenerate people, whom he was about to send into a strange land, where he must share with them in their national calamities. This led him to cry pathetically for divine compassion. "O Lord, remember me, and visit me,—take me not away in thy long suffering; know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart— I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced. I sat alone, because of thy hand." To this pertinent and pious petition God gives a gracious answer. "Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return," (that is to me) "then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. And I

will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord." These gracious promises were made to Jeremiah on the condition that he would take forth the precious from the vile, in delivering the messages of God to his people; that is, if he would, in delivering divine messages, distinguish the righteous from the wicked. From this we may justly conclude,

That ministers should, in their preaching, keep up the essential distinction between saints and sinners.

I shall first show that there is an essential distinction between them; and then show why ministers should, in their preaching, keep up this distinction.

I. I am to show that there is an essential distinction between saints and sinners. They do, indeed, in some respects resemble one another. They are alike in their natural powers and faculties. They are alike in their speculative knowledge and mental improvements. They are alike in their civil concerns and pursuits. And they are often alike in their religious tenets and denominations. In these and various other respects, saints differ no more from sinners, than sinners differ from one another, or than saints themselves differ from each other. But notwithstanding all these points of similarity between saints and sinners, they essentially differ in one important respect, and that is, in respect to their hearts. The hearts of saints are benevolent, but the hearts of sinners are selfish. There is therefore a mutual contrariety between the hearts of saints and the hearts of sinners, which forms an essential distinction between them. Now to make it appear that there is really such an essential distinction between saints and sinners, I would observe,

1. That the inspired writers divide all mankind into two, and but two classes, and distinguish them by very different and opposite appellations.

They call the saints the precious, but sinners the vile. They call saints the godly, but sinners the ungodly. They call saints the children of God, but sinners the children of the wicked one. They call saints the elect, but sinners the reprobate. They call saints vessels of mercy, but sinners vessels of wrath. These and many other names of distinction run through both the Old and New Testament. They are used a vast many times in the Psalms and in the Proverbs, in the Gospels and in the Epistles, and in almost every page of the Bible. They are used not to distinguish one saint from another, nor to distinguish one sinner from another, but to distinguish all saints from all sinners. If they had been used to mark the mere

shades of difference between saints, or the mere shades of difference between sinners, they would have but little force to prove any essential difference between saints and sinners. But since all the inspired writers use these diametrically opposite epithets, to mark the only one universal difference between the two classes of mankind, they afford a conclusive evidence that the distinction between them is not merely circumstantial but essential. It is a distinction between benevolence and selfishness, or between sin and holiness; which is as great a moral and essential distinction as can exist between one man and another. It is the same kind of moral and essential distinction as that which exists between Gabriel and Lucifer. The appellations, therefore, which the sacred writers employ in speaking of the two different classes of mankind, give us infallible evidence that there is an essential moral distinction between those whom they call saints and those whom they call sinners.

2. God does that for saints which he does not do for sinners; which proves that they essentially differ.

God said to his captive people in Babylon by the prophet Ezekiel, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." But he determined to do this for some and not for all. So he told them by the prophet Jeremiah. "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord — and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." Christ we are told, "came unto his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." — This act of sovereignty in changing the hearts of men Christ saw, approved and admired. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The apostle also asserts that God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." And he says God did actually display such sovereignty towards the Jews in his day. "Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace." "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for: But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Now, it is easy to see, that as God regenerates saints, but not sinners; gives a new heart to saints, but not to sinners; softens the hearts of saints, but hardens the hearts of sinners; and gives a spiritual discerning of spiritual things to saints, but not to sin-

ners; there must be an essential distinction between them. The hearts of saints must be essentially different from the hearts of sinners.

3. God has made promises of good to saints, but none to sinners; which proves they are essentially different in their moral characters.

He promises to hear the prayers of saints, but not the prayers of sinners. He promises to give the holy, sanctifying and comforting influences of his Spirit to saints, but not to sinners. He promises to hold communion with saints, but not with sinners. He promises saints that he will guard and support them under all the evils of the present life, and cause all things to work together for their good; but he makes no such promises to sinners. He promises to give unto saints eternal life; to prepare mansions for them in heaven; to come again and receive them unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also; but he has made no such promises to sinners. These promises, and such as these, the apostle Peter assures all saints, belong to them exclusively. "Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia; elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation — Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ; whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Can we suppose that God would make such great and precious promises to saints and not to sinners, if saints were not essentially different from, and far more excellent than sinners? Besides,

4. God has threatened that evil to sinners, which he has not threatened to saints.

He says to sinners, that their prosperity shall destroy them, and that he will curse their blessings. — Christ says, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God

abideth on him." Again he says, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Paul says, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Since God has threatened both temporal and eternal evil to sinners, which he has not threatened to saints; we must conclude, that they are essentially different in their moral character. If there was only a gradual difference in the goodness of saints and of sinners, we should naturally suppose that God would make only a gradual difference in his promises and threatenings to them. But when we find that he has promised pure, perfect, eternal happiness to saints in a future state, and threatened complete and eternal misery to sinners in the world to come, we must believe that they essentially differ in the moral exercises of their hearts; — or in other words, that saints love God supremely, but sinners hate him supremely. We cannot conceive that any other than this essential distinction between them, should be a just ground for God's treating them so infinitely different in a future and eternal state. Thus God, by giving peculiar appellations to saints, which he does not give to sinners; by operating on the hearts of saints as he never does upon the hearts of sinners; by making great and precious promises to saints, which he does not make to sinners; and by threatening eternal misery to sinners, which he does not to saints; gives us all the evidence he can give us in this world, that there is an essential moral difference between them.

The next thing is to show,

II. Why ministers should, in their preaching, constantly exhibit and keep up this great moral and essential distinction between those who love, and those who have not the love of God in them. God, every where in his word, makes this distinction in speaking to saints and to sinners, and requires ministers to make it, in speaking from him to them. He says to the prophet in the text, "Thou shalt take forth the precious from the vile." He says concerning the priests, "They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the clean and the unclean." When ministers make the same distinction in preaching to the mixed characters among their people, that God makes in speaking to them in his word, then they are as his mouth, and properly instruct and warn them from him; which is the principal branch of their

sacred office. There are several plain and weighty reasons, why ministers should, in their general course of preaching, make and keep up the essential distinction between saints and sinners.

1. This is necessary, in order to preach the word of God intelligibly to their people.

To preach intelligibly and instructively, they must not only recite various and numerous passages of scripture, but explain the true meaning of the passages they recite and apply; which cannot be done, without keeping in view that essential distinction between saints and sinners, which runs through the whole Bible. That distinction will always be a very useful guide to determine what many passages of scripture do mean, or at least what they do not mean: and in many cases, it is as important to know what a particular passage does not mean as to know what it does mean. Whenever God speaks to saints, or to sinners, he always speaks to them according to the essential distinctions in their moral characters. And though we cannot always know what he means when he speaks to saints, nor always know what he means when he speaks to sinners; yet we may always know that, when he speaks to saints, he does not mean to say any thing to them, which will equally apply to sinners; and when he speaks to sinners, that he does not mean to say any thing to them, which will equally apply to saints. If ministers, then, would preach intelligibly and instructively to both saints and sinners, they must exhibit their distinctive characters in plain and scripture language, and cause them to know the difference between the godly and ungodly. And when they cause their people to understand this serious and interesting distinction, every one will know how to apply the preaching he hears, to his own appropriate character. All who read the Bible know, that God calls some men saints and some men sinners; and all who hear evangelical ministers preach, know that they call some men saints and some men sinners; but there are many that do not know what God means, or what ministers mean, by calling some saints and some sinners. It is the proper business of ministers, therefore, to explain what God means, and what they mean, by this distinction of characters. It is impossible, that they should preach intelligibly to their people in general, if they do not distinguish them by the scripture appellations of saints and sinners.

2. It is necessary that they should make and maintain this distinction in their public discourses, in order to give pertinent and profitable instruction to their hearers.

They cannot preach instructively and beneficially to saints or sinners, unless they clearly describe their appropriate, scriptural characters, and cause them to see wherein they essentially

differ. Though they may often use the terms, saints and sinners, and occasionally address them under these scriptural appellations; yet their people in general will neither understand nor apply what they hear, to their own appropriate characters, so long as they imagine these appellations denote mere shades of difference. God makes such promises to saints as he does not to sinners; and he denounces such threatenings to sinners as he does not to saints. If these different classes of hearers misunderstand their real characters, saints will be liable to apply to themselves the threatenings made to sinners; and sinners will be liable to apply to themselves the promises made to saints. Such misapprehensions and misapplications are injurious to saints, and may be fatal to sinners. If ministers would preach profitably to their people, they must rightly divide the word of truth, and give to every one his portion in due season. But they cannot preach in this proper, profitable, discriminating manner, without rightly dividing saints from sinners; without rightly describing their diverse and opposite exercises of heart; without applying the promises and threatenings of God according to their respective characters. Though ministers may preach ever so pathetically and solemnly, yet if they do not rightly divide the word of truth, and properly apply the promises of God to saints and his threatenings to sinners, their preaching may be not only unprofitable, but extremely dangerous. It was Christ's principal and most prominent object in his public and private discourses, to draw a plain line of distinction between those who had, and those who had not the love of God in them; or between those who were his friends, and those who were his enemies. Witness his sermon on the mount, and his parable of the publican and the Pharisee. The apostles followed his example, and so should all their successors in the ministry. Moreover,

3. Ministers must distinguish saints from sinners, in order to preach faithfully, as well as profitably.

Faithfulness requires them to do what God has expressly required them to do. He requires them to take forth the precious from the vile. He requires them to teach his people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. They cannot be faithful to God, nor to his people, nor to themselves; unless they sincerely desire and endeavor to preach the most peculiar and important doctrines and duties of the gospel, in the most unequivocal and discriminating manner. Here the fear or favor of man is extremely apt to warp their fidelity. The Jewish teachers grossly failed in this point, for which God severely censured them. He said to them, "Ye have made the

heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wickedness." There is nothing more disagreeable to people in general, than to hear the essential distinction between saints and sinners plainly exhibited; and the doctrines and duties, the promises and threatenings of the gospel explained, inculcated, and applied according to this distinction. It makes saints feel their peculiar obligations and deficiences, and it makes sinners feel their peculiar guilt and danger. If ministers, then, would be clear of the blood of all men, they will declare all the counsel of God; and keep back nothing which they believe will be profitable for the edification and comfort of saints, and for the conviction and conversion of sinners. And if they do not seek to please men, but to be the servants of God, the promise which he made to Jeremiah on the condition of his faithfulness will apply to them individually. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth; let them return unto thee; but return thou not unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord." Christ himself, just before he left the world, gave a similar command and promise to all his faithful ministers, in all future ages. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world."

Thus I have endeavored to exhibit the nature, reality and importance of that distinction, which divides all mankind into two essentially different classes, and which runs through both the Old and New Testament, and gives a peculiar complexion to all the peculiar sentiments of the gospel.

It now remains to apply the subject.

1. It appears from what has been said, that it is utterly a fault in ministers, either designedly or undesignedly, to keep the essential distinction between saints and sinners out of sight. They may commit this fault various ways. They may seldom use the appellations which God uses to distinguish saints from sinners; and when they do use them, they may take care not to explain them in such a manner as to make it appear that they are essentially different in their moral characters. They may very rarely speak of them, or to them, as renewed or unrenewed, converted or unconverted, sanctified or unsanctified. They may decline using such scriptural phraseology, and adopt the language of the world on this subject, which has no precise

meaning. The men of the world frequently use epithets to distinguish shades of difference in moral character. They call one a noble and another a mean man. They call one an honest and another a dishonest man. They call one a prudent and another an imprudent man. They call one a mild and another a rough man. They call one a good hearted and another a bad hearted man. By such terms as these, they mean to signify that they have the same sorts of good and bad men among themselves that the Bible calls saints and sinners, godly and ungodly, holy and unholy, the precious and the vile. And in this way the men of the world mean to destroy the essential distinction between saints and sinners. Ministers, therefore, who wish to keep this essential distinction between these two classes of men out of sight, may employ the same method to do it. When they have occasion of speaking about saints and sinners, they do not use the scripture appellations, such as godly and ungodly, converted and unconverted; but adopt the same phrases and circumlocutions that the men of the world use, to designate the various grades or shades of difference in the moral characters among themselves. And though many pious hearers do not observe this artful mode of preaching, yet the men of the world generally observe it, and always admire it.

Another way, some preachers take to keep the great distinction between saints and sinners out of view, is to neglect preaching upon such doctrines as necessarily imply it; in particular, the doctrine of total depravity, regeneration, progressive sanctification, and the final separation between the righteous and the wicked in the future world; or if they do occasionally mention these doctrines, they take care not to explain them clearly and intelligibly, but leave their hearers to understand them in their own sense, which they will all approve. For all who believe the Bible, believe it contains such doctrines as a death in trespasses and sins, regeneration, conversion, sanctification, eternal life and eternal death; and they are willing to hear ministers use those words, if they will not explain what they mean, but leave them to put their own construction upon them. And in our religious congregations, people in general do not think that these scriptural doctrines imply an essential distinction between saints and sinners; and if they do not imply this, they are little concerned to know what they do mean. They can hear an Arminian, a Methodist, a Unitarian, or a Universalist, with pleasure and approbation. And when they have heard such preachers, they frequently observe that they could not see but they preached like other men, and that they certainly said a great many good things.

There is another way which some preachers adopt to keep

the essential distinction between saints and sinners out of sight, and that is never to explain wherein this distinction consists. People are generally willing to hear that there is an essential distinction between those whom the Bible calls the godly and ungodly, the precious and the vile, if the distinction be not explained, and they are allowed to understand it as they please. But if it be plainly explained to consist in the difference between disinterested love and selfishness, between love to God and hatred of God, between love to holiness and hatred of holiness, between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the devil, they abhor and denounce the distinction. For this and other reasons, so many preachers neglect and avoid explaining this distinction between saints and sinners, and the doctrines that depend upon it. And this very faulty neglect renders their preaching unmeaning, unprofitable and dangerous.

2. In the view of this subject, we may see how easy it is for ministers to lead people insensibly into great and fatal errors. They may do so, by not mentioning or not explaining the essential distinction between saints and sinners; or by not mentioning or not explaining the peculiar doctrines of the gospel which flow from this distinction; while, at the same time, they preach some valuable truths. The Jewish teachers led the people into many false and dangerous opinions, by preaching some less essential, but neglecting more important doctrines; for which Christ pointedly reproved them. "Then spake Jesus to the multitudes, and to his disciples, saying, the Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." But notwithstanding the good instructions they gave, he denounces a solemn wo against them for their great defect and neglect in their preaching. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." For such a great defect and fault in their preaching, he calls them "blind guides," "leaders of the blind." By preaching some truths, and omitting others of far greater importance, they insensibly led the people to imagine they were saints while they were sinners, and to hate, oppose and reject the humiliating doctrines of the gospel which Christ preached. In precisely the same way, false teachers now insensibly lead their hearers into gross and fatal errors. Arminians and Methodists preach some precious truths; so do Unitarians and Universalists; but they studiously omit to mention, or to illustrate and prove the peculiar and essential doctrines of the gospel. Such seducers have, for many years past, concealed their poison-

ous sentiments by mixing them with some pleasing truths. And they are still pursuing the same course; by which they are rooting up orthodoxy, and imperceptibly spreading their fatal delusions. Christ compares those who propagate gross and destructive errors, to wolves in sheep's clothing. They often put on a harmless appearance, and express a tender and ardent desire to lead their votaries in the plainest and easiest way to heaven. But the apostle warns men to avoid them. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple."

3. If there be an essential distinction between saints and sinners, then sinners are very liable to be fatally deceived and corrupted by those who lie in wait to deceive and destroy. Saints have an antidote against the poison of error, that sinners are entirely destitute of. Saints are lovers of God and of his word; they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. David says to God, "O how love I thy law!" "I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold." The hearts of all good men are attached to divine truth. But sinners are lovers of their own selves, and haters of God, and equally haters of his word. They love darkness rather than light, and error rather than truth. This they have always manifested, when both truth and error have been equally exhibited before them. They were more ready to hearken to the false, than to the true prophets under the law; and they have been more ready to hearken to erroneous, than to orthodox preachers under the gospel. They still carry in their hearts a supreme love to error. They love to hear any preachers who tell them there is no essential difference in the characters of saints and sinners. They love any errors better than any truths, and any preachers better than those who preach the doctrines according to godliness. All errorists have human nature on their side; and it is not strange that they make proselytes of those who are under the entire dominion of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God. There never was a time when all classes of sinners in this country were so much exposed to be led into gross religious errors, as at this day. A spirit of false zeal to spread false sentiments is every where enkindled, and every where spreading like electrical fire, and there is no want of combustibles any where. All who are destitute of the love of God and of the love of truth, are surrounded with dangers by the enemies of all righteousness. The self righteous

are in danger of Arminianism. The self conceited are in danger of Unitarianism. The vicious and profligate are in danger of Universalism. Let every one that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

4. It appears from what has been said, that the best way the ministers of the gospel can take to guard their people against every species of error and errorists, is to make and keep up the essential distinction between saints and sinners. By making this a prominent object in their general course of preaching, their people will very naturally and easily become acquainted with all the leading doctrines of the gospel; for all these grow out of the doctrine of total depravity, which forms the essential distinction between sinners and saints. If ministers can but make their people understand this distinction in its nature, and in its connection with other first principles of the gospel, they will be able to guard themselves against all fatal errors and the fallacious arguments, which may be used to support them. It is of little avail for ministers to preach against errorists, who are under strong delusion to believe a lie, and who care not what is said against themselves; but they do care for what ministers preach to their own people. For they are afraid of a people well indoctrinated, who are able to defend themselves against erroneous novices. Ministers can do nothing more effectual to guard their people against corrupters, than to teach them plainly the principal doctrines of Christianity. And this indeed is the very way they are required to watch and guard their flocks against those who wish to scatter and destroy them. God requires them to take forth the precious from the vile, that they may be as his mouth; and to teach them the difference between the holy and unholy; or the distinction between truth and error. So long as they do this, they may hope for a divine blessing to attend their labors and instructions. And we know, that so long as ministers in general through New England did continue orthodox, and inculcate the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, they did keep their churches and congregations from great and fatal errors. It is melancholy to see so many standard-bearers fainting in this day of danger, when the enemy are coming in like a flood.

5. We learn from what has been said, how the people may easily discover the real sentiments of ministers by their preaching. They often complain that they cannot know, by their preaching, what the sentiments of ministers are. It is undoubtedly true, that many do mean to conceal their real sentiments. But every method they take to conceal their sentiments, serves to discover them to every orthodox and judicious hearer; because it is much easier to determine what their real sentiments

are, by what they do not preach, than by what they do preach. They may preach about every doctrine of the gospel, about every Christian virtue, and about every moral evil; but if they never preach the doctrine of total depravity, nor exhibit the essential distinction between saints and sinners, their hearers may justly conclude, that they do not believe any of the doctrines and duties of Christianity, in their true, scriptural sense. By this criterion, it is easy to discover that an Arminian, an Episcopalian, a Methodist, a Unitarian, or Chaunceyan Universalist is essentially erroneous, in respect to the first principles of the oracles of God. Though these different denominations sometimes use scripture expressions and say some very good things, yet they never preach the doctrine of total depravity, nor the doctrine of regeneration, nor the doctrine of personal election to eternal life, in a clear, scriptural manner; and by this deficiency in their preaching, they show to all who observe it, that they really maintain some erroneous opinions upon these great and important subjects. But people are not half so apt to observe what preachers do not say, as what they do say. And to this it is principally owing, that heterodox preachers are supposed to be orthodox; while on the other hand, orthodox preachers are known by what they do say, and not merely by what they do not say. No man, who plainly preaches the doctrines of total depravity, of special grace, of election, and of reprobation, is ever taken to be an Arminian, or Methodist, or Unitarian, or Universalist. If people, therefore, would take as much notice of what ministers do not say, as of what they do say, they would seldom be at a loss to form a very correct judgment concerning the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of any of the preachers they hear. They could not, indeed, always determine the shades of difference between one orthodox preacher and another; but they could easily determine the essential difference between any orthodox and heterodox preacher. Let orthodox ministers discourse upon what subject they may, they rarely fail to bring into view, either directly or indirectly, total depravity, or the essential difference between saints and sinners; but let heterodox ministers discourse upon what subject they will, they scarcely ever fail to keep this distinction out of sight. Ministers are to blame, if they mean to conceal their sentiments in their preaching; and people are to blame, if they do not discover their sentiments, whether they mean to discover them or not; for there is one plain, easy way by which they may and ought to do it.

6. It appears from what has been said, that there may be a great deal of good preaching in the land, and at the same time, a great want of good preaching. This was the case in Christ's day; the preachers said a great many things which they ought

to say, but omitted to say many things of more importance, which they ought to have said. And this is the case at the present day in every part of the Christian world. Preachers are extremely numerous; and they all, perhaps, preach some things which are true, useful, and such as ought to be preached. But alas! how many preach what they ought not to preach, and neglect or refuse to preach what ought to be preached! The time was, when the ministers in this country, all believed and preached the same things. They preached the doctrine of total depravity, and the various important doctrines which flow from it. They distinguished saints from sinners, by the same appellations by which they are distinguished in the Bible. They applied the promises of the gospel to saints only, and its threatenings to sinners only, and its invitations and commands to all without exception. But has not this mode of preaching become very unfashionable at the present day? How many ministers do not take forth the precious from the vile, nor cause their hearers to see and feel the difference! They leave their people to apply the promises or threatenings of the gospel to themselves, without teaching them to whom they belong; and can it be thought but strange if they misapply them? In this way, a great deal of good preaching is spoiled and worse than spoiled, by the mere want of a better mode of preaching, which would give meaning and energy to every divine truth.

Finally: This subject calls upon saints to walk worthy of their high and holy calling. They are called the precious, the holy, the godly, the excellent of the earth. These appellations imply, that they have that love to God, that repentance of sins, that faith in Christ, and that series of pure, holy, heavenly affections, of which sinners are entirely destitute. It becomes them to exhibit and maintain the truth, the reality, and the importance of the doctrines according to godliness, which they profess to believe and love. God has given them a new heart and a new spirit, made them partakers of his own nature, and entitled them to the blessings of his own kingdom. And since he has so highly distinguished them, they ought to distinguish themselves from the men, the manners, and the spirit of the world. He has called them out of darkness into marvellous light, that they might be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. By living agreeably to the spirit of the gospel, and contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, they may be happily instrumental, in turning sinners from the error of their ways, and saving their souls from death. This is a powerful motive, which ought to quicken and animate them to be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

SERMON XIX.

MINISTERIAL FIDELITY.

INSTALLATION OF REV. DR. PARK, STOUGHTON, DECEMBER 13, 1826.

THE prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. — JER. xxiii. 28.

IN Jeremiah's day, there were many false teachers, who presumed to preach their own dreams and delusions, under pretence of preaching divine truth. This was highly displeasing to God, who first reproves such deceivers for their criminal presumption, and then admonishes those whom he had actually authorized to speak his word, to speak it faithfully. "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." What was called prophesying under the Old Testament, is called preaching under the New. Noah was a prophet and preacher. And the apostle uses the term prophesying, to denote preaching. The spirit of the text, therefore, warrants us to say,

That every minister ought to preach the word of God faithfully. To illustrate this plain and practical subject, I shall first explain this ministerial duty, and then enforce the practice of it.

In pursuing the method proposed, I can hardly fail of saying the same things which have often been said, and often been better said before; but which those who give and receive religious instruction can scarcely hear too often. To preach the word of God faithfully implies,

1. That a minister understands it. This is suggested in the

text. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." By having the word of God, is meant having the knowledge of it, in distinction from having a dream, or a mere imaginary idea of divine truth. It is impossible that a minister should preach the word of God faithfully without knowing what it is. Could the apostles, who were sent into the world to preach the gospel, have fulfilled their duty, if they had not understood the gospel which they were commanded to preach? The word of God contains a complete system of religion, which is entirely different from every false scheme ever devised by man. To preach the word of God is to explain and inculcate the very scheme of religion which he has revealed, and which never could have been known had he not revealed it. But who can do this without understanding what he has revealed? It is true that a perfect knowledge of every text in the Bible is not necessary, in order to preach the word of God faithfully. No man does, nor perhaps ever will, possess such a universal and perfect knowledge of the scriptures. But yet a clear, a just and general knowledge of the first principles of the oracles of God, is necessary to qualify a preacher for the faithful discharge of his duty. A novice, who is unskilful in the word of righteousness, is expressly forbidden to preach the gospel. Ministers must have the word of God in their understandings as well as in their hearts, in order to be able and faithful instructers of the doctrines and duties of Christianity.

2. They must not only understand the word of God, but know that they understand it. "He that hath a dream," saith the Lord, "let him tell a dream," and not pretend it is my word; "and he that hath my word, let him speak my word;" and speak it as mine, and not as his own. But if ministers do not know that they understand the word of God, how can they, with propriety and sincerity, preach his word as his word? To do this would be daring presumption. There is, however, no occasion of their ever being guilty of this presumption; for if they do understand the word of God, they may know that they understand it. The Bible contains a plain and consistent system of divine truths, which have a plain, consistent, and important meaning. This is true of the scriptures in general, and of detached passages in particular. So that those who search the writings of the inspired penmen with attention and impartiality, may know the mind of God in respect to the great and essential doctrines of the gospel. To suppose the contrary, is to suppose that the Bible is a sealed book, and of no use to those for whose spiritual and eternal good it was designed. It must be allowed, then, that ministers may understand the word of God, and may know that they understand it. It is true that a man

may know a certain truth, and yet not know that he knows it; but the reason is, that he does not see the whole evidence which supports it. But the preachers of the gospel should have such a clear and extensive knowledge of the evidences in support of the gospel and of what it contains, as to know that they understand it. The primitive preachers of the gospel knew that they knew, not only the inspiration but the doctrines of the gospel. They could say, "We believe, and therefore speak." They could confidently declare that they did not preach cunningly devised fables. Paul could assure his hearers that he did not come to them with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, but declaring the testimony of God; for he determined to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. If ministers do not understand, and know that they understand the gospel, how can they preach the preaching which God bids them? or how can they be faithful to God, or to their people, or to themselves? He that hath a dream may tell a dream; but he that does not know that he knows the word of God, cannot preach it faithfully as the word of God.

3. Fidelity requires ministers to preach the word of God fully. No other book has been so often and so grossly curtailed, distorted and perverted, as the Bible. It has been read, criticised, explained, and preached upon, in a detached and desultory manner, without a due regard to its connection and harmony, which runs through the whole. But fidelity requires ministers to preach the word of God fully, and lay open the great system of doctrines contained in it. The apostle Paul declares, that he did not preach the gospel in a partial and superficial manner, nor shun to declare the whole counsel of God. And if we look into his epistles, we shall find that he developed the great plan of salvation, as devised by God the Father; as executed by God the Son; and as applied by God the Holy Ghost. He explained the distinct offices and operations of the ever blessed Trinity, in creating, redeeming, and governing the world. Of course, he taught the doctrine of divine decrees; the doctrine of human depravity; the doctrine of vicarious atonement; and the doctrine of divine agency in preparing all mankind for their future and final destination. It is difficult to see how ministers can preach the word of God faithfully, unless they preach it in such a full and comprehensive manner. Though they should preach upon every text in the Bible, yet if they should omit, or but cursorily mention the primary truths of the gospel, they would not preach it fully. God is to be clearly and justly seen and known only in the face of Jesus Christ. No part of his character, and no part of his conduct can be properly understood, or described, detached from his ultimate

end in the creation and redemption of the world. If the word of God itself be profitable, then all its doctrines and duties are profitable; and ought to be explained and inculcated in their nature, connection, extent, and importance. It is strange, indeed, that any suppose that the best way of preaching the gospel is to inculcate its duties, and pass over its doctrines in silence. This is so far from preaching the whole gospel, that it is not preaching half of it; nor even any part of it. There can be no gospel duties, detached from gospel doctrines. It is, therefore, the indispensable duty of ministers to exhibit the whole gospel, and illustrate as fully as possible all its doctrines and duties in their proper order, connection, and full extent.

4. They must preach the word of God plainly, as well as fully. It is more difficult, as well as more important, to preach plainly, than many are apt to imagine. They should always preach so as to be understood; but they cannot be understood by the great majority of their hearers, unless they use proper words, arranged in their usual, natural, and proper order. The language of the sacred writers is at once pure, simple, energetic, and plain to the least, and pleasing to the most cultivated minds. Christ preached as he conversed, with peculiar perspicuity. Paul imitated his example. He said he had rather speak five words which were easy to be understood, and edifying to common christians, than ten thousand which they could not understand, and which could do them no good. But there is a plainness of method, as well as of language, which is necessary, in order to preach instructively and faithfully. Preachers may use plain words, and yet throw their thoughts and sentiments together in such a desultory and irregular manner, that it will be very difficult for any to catch their meaning. No man can speak intelligibly to any audience, without previously proposing in his own mind some definite subject, and some definite mode of treating it. Though Fenelon and some other celebrated writers on public speaking, recommend a concealed method, and reprobate the practice of mentioning the leading topics and general divisions of a discourse, yet this seems calculated to excite attention, more than to convey instruction. The perspicuity or transparency of a discourse principally depends upon a lucid order and natural arrangement of ideas. And for this reason, it seems proper that the preacher should expressly mention his main design, and the method in which he intends to accomplish it. This will greatly assist his hearers in understanding and retaining his discourse. Allowing Fenelon to be correct, in representing the whole business of the preacher to consist in proving, painting, and moving the passions; still the best way to effect all these purposes in the same

discourse is to divide it naturally, and to mention the heads distinctly. This is evidently the best method in a didactic discourse. And when a subject is of a more practical nature, it is no less necessary to observe a strict order and connection through the whole. It is a question whether it ever be proper to neglect or conceal a method in treating upon any subject whatever, since every subject ought to be treated plainly and instructively. There is no point, perhaps, in which preachers are more apt to fail, especially at the present day, than in the want of perspicuity. Some seem fond of preaching immethodically, that they may more smoothly and imperceptibly pass over, or but slightly touch upon, the most important doctrines of the gospel, which require explanation and proof. Such superficial preaching is better suited to please than to instruct. But Paul avoided all art and disguise in preaching. "We have," says he, "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." So that, as he adds, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." This example all will follow, who mean to preach the gospel plainly and faithfully, for their own sake, and for the good of their people.

5. Fidelity requires ministers to preach the gospel in its purity and simplicity. They have no right to mix their own crude and confounded opinions with the revealed truths, which they are commanded to deliver. The teachers under the law were addicted to corrupt the pure word of God by their idle dreams and vain conceits. This is plainly intimated in the text. "He that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." Truth mixed with error, is like wheat mixed with chaff; and every one knows that wheat is totally unfit for use until it is separated from the chaff. Truth mixed with error, is often more dangerous than mere error alone. There was nothing which Christ more severely reproved the Scribes and Pharisees for, than their mixing truth with error in their false glosses and gross perversion of scripture. They explained away the important truths of the Bible, and palmed their own dreams and imaginations upon the minds of the people, instead of teaching the pure commandments of God. Soon after Christian churches were planted, there arose false teachers, who mixed the absurd opinions of the heathen philosophers with the pure doctrines of Christianity. This gave occasion to the apostle to exhort Timothy and Titus, not to give heed to fables and endless genealogies; but to shun pro-

fane and vain babblings and opposition of science, falsely so called. The same practice of corrupting the word of God, still continues and prevails in the Christian world. How many set up reason as their infallible guide in explaining scripture, and doubt or deny every doctrine, which they imagine does not agree with that false standard? Upon this ground they deny the doctrine of the sacred Trinity, the doctrine of Christ's divine nature, the doctrine of the divine decrees, the doctrine of atonement, the doctrine of special grace in the renovation of the heart, and many other plain, scripture doctrines. But Paul vindicates himself and the other apostles from thus corrupting the gospel. "We are not as many who corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." It is essential to fidelity in preaching divine truths, to preach them in their primitive purity and simplicity, as they lie in the word of God, without disguising, obscuring, or explaining them away.

6. It belongs to the office of those who preach the word of God, to defend it against its open enemies. The gospel has never failed to meet with opposition from men of corrupt minds. It is the part of faithful ministers to guard it against the attacks of its most bold and subtle opposers. They are set for the defence of the gospel; and charged, in meekness to instruct those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. And to hold fast the faithful word, that by sound doctrine, they may both exhort and convince gainsayers, whose mouths must be stopped. It is the duty of private christians, and much more of ministers, to "contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints." A great part of the preaching of the prophets, and of Christ's preaching, was pointed against those who maintained and propagated false doctrines. Paul preached with great plainness and severity against the enemies and perverters of the gospel. "I marvel," says he to the Galatians, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you — let him be accursed." It is as necessary, that preachers should oppose error, as that they should explain and inculcate truth. And therefore fidelity requires them to defend the gospel against all the prejudices, objections, and opposition of gainsayers; and against all the artifices and sophistical reasonings of those, who lie in wait to deceive. I must add,

7. That the faithful preaching of the gospel necessarily

includes godly sincerity. It has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. He employs ministers as instruments to carry on his gracious purpose. They cannot be faithful in their work, unless they sincerely seek the great end which he is seeking by their ministry. The apostles possessed that pure, disinterested love to God and man, which the gospel they preached enjoined and inspired. "For," say they, "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." And, "as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts." Every preacher ought feelingly to say, what Paul says of himself. "Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Christ requires those to love him supremely, whom he employs to feed his sheep and lambs.

I now proceed as proposed,

II. To enforce the practice of that ministerial fidelity, which has been explained.

1. In the first place, God expressly commands those who preach his word to be faithful in the discharge of their duty. "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." When he sent Jeremiah to deliver his messages to his people, he said, "Gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them." He said to Ezekiel, whom he sent to the same people, "Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." Our Lord after his resurrection, addressed his apostles, and through them all succeeding ministers of the gospel, in these ever memorable words: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Paul solemnly enjoins it upon Timothy to be faithful in his ministerial office. "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." The commands which God has laid upon his ministers to preach his word faithfully, are clothed with infinite authority; which they cannot disobey,

without exposing themselves to the just displeasure of their supreme and final Judge.

2. In the next place, it concerns them to consider, that they have solemnly bound themselves to be faithful in their sacred office. They have publicly professed before the world, that they desire the office of a bishop, and to have the gospel committed to their trust. By accepting this trust, they have laid themselves under peculiar obligations to be faithful stewards of the mysteries of God. Having vowed to the Lord, they have no right to go back. They have pledged themselves to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If they feed their people with chaff, instead of wheat, they cannot fail of feeling the insupportable pains of self inconsistency, self reproach, and self condemnation. But it must be farther observed,

3. That faithful preaching has a tendency to save, but unfaithful preaching has a tendency to destroy, the souls of men. God himself expressly declares this to be true. Speaking of the false prophets, he says, "If they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." "Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams — therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." If ministers preach the word of God faithfully, they may hope to be instrumental of their salvation; but if they are unfaithful, and teach them error, instead of truth, they may expect to be instrumental of involving them in stupidity, delusion and endless ruin. They are under the most solemn responsibility to God, and to their people, whose souls are committed to their charge, and whose eternal interests are in a measure suspended upon their faithfulness, or unfaithfulness. But if they are faithful, they may adopt the grateful and triumphant language of the apostle: "Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ; and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish." Such are the solemn and weighty motives to ministerial fidelity.

It now remains to improve the subject.

1. If preaching the gospel faithfully includes so much as has been represented, then ministers have a very arduous and laborious work to perform. This I know is generally allowed, but not so generally believed. Not a few are ready to imagine, and sometimes apt to say, that ministers have an easy task, and live an idle life. But neither of these things is true of faithful ministers. If they must understand the gospel; if they must know

they understand it; if they must preach it plainly and extensively; if they must preach it in its purity, without any mixture of error; if they must preach it defensively and sincerely; then their work is not only important to themselves and others, but extremely arduous and laborious. It requires much reading and much thinking, to acquire that knowledge of the gospel, and that knowledge of the human heart, and that knowledge of the various ways of preaching and affecting the human heart, which is necessary in order to preach plainly, instructively, and impressively. Though the Bible affords them abundant matter for their discourses on both common and uncommon occasions, yet it is very laborious to select, arrange, and express divine truths in a proper manner. Invention is the highest effort of the human mind; and no persons have more frequent occasion for the exercise of this mental faculty than preachers of the gospel, in order to find new subjects of discourse, and new modes of treating them. It is easy for him that has a dream to tell a dream. It is easy to preach superficially about the Bible and the doctrines of the Bible; but it is far from being so, to bring forth things new and old out of that treasury, and to feed a people with knowledge and understanding. Many imagine it is an easy thing to preach; and to this it is owing that we have such a multitude of preachers at the present day. It is, however, very difficult and laborious to preach well; as all able and faithful ministers find to be true by actual experience. But besides preaching, they have a vast many pastoral services to perform, which require the exercise of all their wisdom, prudence, zeal, and self denial. These are greater trials, as a French author justly observes, than any other professional men are called to endure. In a word, the public and private services of faithful ministers are extremely laborious; and more than enough to employ all their time and all their abilities.

2. If ministers are bound to preach the truth and the whole truth faithfully, then they are bound to preach against every species of error, whether in principle or practice. They are set as watchmen to espy danger, and warn their people against it. If they discover any propagating false and dangerous principles, it is their indispensable duty to expose and refute such errors and delusions; and to warn their people against them, without fear or favor of the propagators; whether they are Atheists, Skeptics, Deists, Unitarians, Arminians, Methodists, Antinomians, or Universalists. Or if they find any who appear to be deceiving themselves, by fixing their hopes of future happiness upon a false and dangerous foundation, it is no less necessary to deal plainly and faithfully with them, and if possi-

ble, to convince them of their error, and persuade them to embrace the truth. Fidelity requires the discharge of these duties, which are extremely difficult to perform, without giving offence; for few can patiently bear to have the soundness of their understanding, or the goodness of their heart called in question, or the ground of their spiritual hopes taken away. But if watchmen on the walls of Zion mean to be faithful, they must set their face as a flint; and boldly combat the powers of darkness, and the corruptions of human nature. Jeremiah delivered the divine messages faithfully, though it exposed him to the general reproach of the guilty.

3. If ministers are bound to preach the word of God faithfully, then they can have no excuse for being unfaithful. Their obligations to fidelity are superior to all the reasons they can possibly urge in excuse for unfaithfulness. If they plead ignorance, for not preaching some truths, or for preaching some errors; this will not excuse them. For they are bound to know the truth, and to know that they know it. Therefore, they must be inexcusable for preaching what they do not know; and for not preaching what they do know. If they plead that fidelity would injure their personal interest; this will not excuse them for unfaithfulness. For they have no right to employ their time, or strength, or talents, in pursuing any business, or promoting any interest, that is inconsistent with the work of the ministry, which they have solemnly engaged to perform faithfully. If they plead opposition to the truth; this will not excuse them for neglecting to preach it. It is their duty to disregard or overcome opposition, and to continue preaching the truth, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. The commands of God, their own engagements, the cause of Christ, and the salvation of souls, create obligations to fidelity, paramount to all possible excuses for unfaithfulness, in the sight of God and man.

4. If ministers are bound to preach the word of God faithfully, then they ought not to be afraid to preach it faithfully. Their greatest danger lies in neglecting, and not in doing their duty. The word which they preach is the sword of the Spirit, and if rightly wielded can disarm the enemies of truth. So long as they preach the truth in love, they may safely confide in the promised presence and protection of Christ. But if they are unfaithful, they have just reason to fear; for this will arm both God and man against them. Though they may expect that impenitent sinners and backsliding christians will be offended, if they preach plainly, and reprove, rebuke, and exhort them faithfully; yet the frowns of such persons are better than their smiles, and less to be feared. For their disapprobation

will sooner or later turn into approbation. They will be constrained to approve of that faithfulness, which was intended and calculated to promote their highest good. Many such instances have been known, under the faithful preaching of the gospel. When the enemies of the truth become cordially reconciled to it, they never fail to be reconciled to those who plainly and faithfully preach it. But if they cannot gain the approbation of their hearts, they may gain the approbation of their consciences in favor of their faithfulness, by putting this pointed question to them: "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Fidelity to God will banish the fear of man, which bringeth a snare. Let us, therefore, my brethren, make the Lord himself our fear and our dread, and then we may hope that his grace will be sufficient for us, and his strength be made perfect in our weakness; and through his strengthening us, we may do all that he has commanded us.

Finally: The whole current of this discourse naturally leads us to believe, that God highly favors those to whom he sends able and faithful ministers. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and one of the richest blessings he ever bestowed upon mankind. As such he esteems them, and promises to give them to his people. "I will give you pastors according to my heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Wherever God sends his faithful ministers, there is ground to hope that he will be with them, assist them in their great and good work, and crown their labors with desired success. Though he has lately called away from this Church and religious Society, a faithful minister as we suppose, yet he has not forgotten or forsaken them; for he is this day about to send them a pastor, whose piety, ability, and fidelity have been long known and highly esteemed. He is opening a bright and promising prospect before the eyes of this little flock; and providentially indicating his gracious design, that they shall not suffer a famine of the word; but shall be guided, comforted, and instructed, by one who shall rightly divide the word of truth, and bring out of his treasure things new and old. They have, therefore, peculiar reason to rejoice on this auspicious occasion, and to hope that they shall see good days, according to the days in which they have seen evil. But it behooves them to remember, that to whom much has been given, of them much will be required.

SERMON XX.

SYSTEMATIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOSPEL.

NORFOLK AUXILIARY EDUCATION SOCIETY, AT DORCHESTER, JUNE 11, 1817.

HOLD fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me.—2 TIM. i. 13

WHILE Paul was passing through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches, he came to Lystra, where he found a certain disciple, named Timothy, who was highly esteemed by the Christian brethren in that city. This recommended him to the notice and acquaintance of the apostle; who being fully persuaded of his unfeigned piety and promising talents, determined to take him with him, and prepare him, by proper instruction, to preach the gospel. Timothy gratefully received and wisely improved this precious privilege, made great proficiency in theological knowledge, and soon became acquainted with the whole scheme of religious sentiments which the apostle embraced and taught. This is more than intimated in the words I have read. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me." The gospel which Paul understood, believed and preached, contains the whole plan of redemption, which was formed in the divine mind before the foundation of the world. And though the first principles of this scheme of grace lie scattered through all the sacred pages, yet they are all inseparably connected, and compose one consistent and complete system of divine truths. This form of sound words, or rather this system of sound doctrines, the apostle taught Timothy, and exhorted him to hold fast, as a necessary and indispensable qualification for the gospel minis-

try. The opinion and practice of the apostle in this instance, naturally leads us to conclude,

That a systematical knowledge of the gospel is still necessary, to qualify other pious young men, as well as Timothy, for the same sacred office.

This single point I shall endeavor to support and illustrate by the following observations.

First: Young men who are preparing for the ministry, should understand the harmony and connection which run through all the peculiar and essential doctrines of the gospel. These are so intimately connected, that they cannot be clearly understood, separately considered. Who can understand moral depravity, without understanding moral virtue? Who can understand the nature of regeneration, without understanding the nature of true holiness? Who can understand the doctrine of justification, without understanding the doctrine of atonement? Who can understand the doctrine of atonement, without understanding the doctrine of vindictive justice? Who can understand the doctrine of vindictive justice, without understanding the nature and demerit of sin? Or who can understand the nature of the divine government over all the moral world, without knowing the nature of moral agency in all moral beings? All these doctrines are plainly and confessedly contained in the gospel, in some sense or other. I do not presume to say in what sense they are to be understood; but I do not hesitate to say, that they ought to be understood in a sense, which renders them harmonious and consistent with each other. If a preacher understands one doctrine of the gospel in a sense which is inconsistent with the sense in which he understands another doctrine of the gospel, it is as certain that he misunderstands one or both of those doctrines, as it is that the gospel is true; for if the gospel be true, it is equally true that all its doctrines are perfectly harmonious and consistent, and must appear so when rightly understood. Many have undertaken to preach the gospel without having a systematical knowledge of its fundamental principles; but they have never failed of running into gross contradictions, which were too apparent not to be perceived by their attentive and intelligent hearers. There is scarcely any point in which preachers are more apt to fail, than in point of consistency. So far as they are ignorant of that system of doctrines which the gospel contains, just so far they will preach inconsistently, and contradict at one time what they have said at another. It is utterly impracticable to exhibit one doctrine or duty of Christianity, with propriety and consistency, without a systematic knowledge of the first principles of the oracles of God. As the most pious

and ingenious young man cannot have a proper understanding of the harmony and connection which exists among all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel without a systematic knowledge of them, so it is highly necessary that he should possess this systematic knowledge, before he undertakes to preach the great doctrines and duties of Christianity.

Secondly: A systematical knowledge of the principal doctrines of the Bible is necessary, in order to understand and explain the true meaning of the scriptures in general. All, who have read and studied the word of God with serious and critical attention, have found a great many passages which they could not easily explain, in a clear and consistent manner. It is true, indeed, that some very ingenious and learned men have written criticisms, expositions and commentaries upon the Bible. But let a young student in divinity consult any of these expositors, and he will probably find, that they have created about as many and as great difficulties, as they have removed; and after all, he must resort to some other method, in order to discover the true meaning of the sacred writers. Here then it may be asked, To what better method can he resort? I will not say in this case, as a learned professor of theology says, he must resort solely to the Bible to explain itself. This appears to be absurd. If the Bible explains itself, one would be apt to conclude that it contains no difficult passages, which need to be explained. One passage of scripture cannot explain another, because every passage is equally true in its proper sense. Suppose all the seemingly contradictory passages of scripture were placed in two opposite columns, how could this serve to explain either column? For the point to be decided is not this; whether one column be true, and the other false; because both, being divinely inspired, must be equally true in their real and proper meaning. It is granted that the historical and classical knowledge of a young student, may enable him to explain such difficulties in scripture as arise from the customs, or manners, or laws, or languages, or religions of ancient times and nations; but this knowledge will afford him no assistance in explaining such difficulties as arise from passages of apparently conflicting sentiments. Hence arises the necessity of having some acknowledged and infallible standard, with which all passages of scripture that appear to contradict each other in sense, may be compared, and their true meaning ascertained. And such a standard is every essential doctrine of the gospel. For we know that, if the gospel be true, there can no genuine passage of scripture be found, which really carries a meaning repugnant to it. It may be taken for granted, that there is not a single text in the Bible, that has a meaning which is really in-

consistent with the doctrine of true benevolence, or with the doctrine of human depravity, or with the doctrine of regeneration, or with the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, or with God's ultimate end in the creation of the world. All the first principles of the gospel are infallible criterions, by by which to ascertain the sense of all dark, difficult, doubtful passages of scripture. And this mode of interpreting the sacred oracles, is agreeable to common sense, and to the common practice of the best interpreters of human laws. Our wise and learned judges, in interpreting the laws of the land and their legal authorities, always appeal to one or more of the first principles of law, as their infallible guide in deciding the most difficult, intricate and important causes. And for my part, I know of no expositor of scripture, whether ancient or modern, whether of this or that denomination of christians, who does not explain detached passages according to some first principle of his own system of divinity. It now appears, we trust, that those who are preparing for the ministry, cannot be duly qualified for their important work, without acquiring a systematical knowledge of the primary truths of the gospel; which is absolutely necessary in order to become able expositors of the sacred volume.

Thirdly: Young men, who are preparing for the ministry, should have a systematical knowledge of the gospel, that they may be able to guard themselves against the religious errors to which they are peculiarly exposed. If they go forth to preach the gospel before they have formed any well digested system of religious sentiments in their own minds, they will be continually exposed to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive. Mankind, who naturally prefer religious error to religious truth, have always used their influence to corrupt the sentiments of their public teachers. The sinners in Zion "said to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits." The same spirit led the same people to employ all their power and art, to draw Christ and the apostles into the most fatal errors. Paul knew that young Timothy would be surrounded by such men as Phygellus and Hermogenes, Hymeneus and Philetus, who had erred concerning the truth, and had actually overthrown the faith of some; and in the view of their corrupting influence, he gave him the seasonable admonition in the text, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me." The offence of the cross has not yet ceased. The men of the world still hate the pure doctrines of the gospel; and though they use less violence, yet they employ more

art to corrupt the principles of their public instructers. There are as many corrupt teachers now, as there were in the apostle's day; and a great many more corrupt authors. With both these sources of corruption young preachers must be acquainted; and by both they will be shaken from their steadfastness, unless they are previously well grounded and established in the pure and peculiar doctrines of the gospel. Their intellectual acumen and classical knowledge alone will be but feeble weapons to repel the eloquent sophistry of corrupt preachers, and the more deep and subtile arguments of corrupt authors. But after they have critically studied the scriptures, in the use of good commentators, and formed a consistent system of theology, under able and evangelical instructers, then they are prepared to converse with the most corrupt men, and to read the most corrupt authors, and compare their sentiments with an infallible standard. Then they can distinctly, and almost instantaneously perceive what agrees or disagrees with the great and essential doctrines of the gospel, which are the touchstone of truth and error; and so be able to repel all assaults upon their orthodoxy, by the most ingenious and learned corrupters. Any man who has acquired a systematical knowledge of grammar, can in a moment discover a grammatical mistake. Any man who has acquired a systematical knowledge of logic, can instantly discover a logical error in reasoning. And any man who has acquired a consistent system of theology, can as easily and instantaneously discover any sentiment which contradicts the analogy of scripture. It was such a systematical knowledge of the gospel, that enabled Paul and Timothy to keep the faith, and preserve themselves from the corrupting influence of both Jews and Gentiles. And it is extremely precipitate and dangerous for any young men to presume to preach the gospel in the face of a frowning, erroneous and corrupting world, until they have acquired this impenetrable shield.

Fourthly: It is necessary that those who are preparing for the ministry should have a systematical knowledge of the gospel, in order to be able to refute as well as to avoid religious errors. Ministers are set for the defence of the gospel. It is their official duty to defend their people, as well as themselves, against false teachers and false doctrines. Christ warned the apostles to beware of false prophets, who come in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravening wolves. Paul warned the elders of Ephesus to take heed unto themselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers; because he knew that grievous wolves would attempt to enter in among them, not sparing the flock. And he told Titus that a bishop must "hold fast the faithful word as he has been

taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." It is the duty of ministers not only to preach and inculcate the truth, but to combat and refute error. Christ pointed a great part of his preaching against the false doctrines and superstitions of the Scribes and Pharisees, who taught for doctrines the commandments of men. The true prophets attacked, refuted, and censured the gross errors and delusions of the false prophets, with the utmost plainness and severity. And Paul employed his superior learning and talents in preaching and writing against the vain philosophy of the heathen moralists, and the absurd doctrines of the Judaizing teachers, and the fatal errors of apostate christians. The corrupt sentiments which are propagated by conversing, preaching, or writing, cannot be effectually refuted by merely quoting and explaining particular passages of scripture; for sectarians commonly have scripture at their tongue's end; and are very expert at quoting and commenting upon particular texts, which they imagine favor and support their peculiar notions. The most proper and effectual method to stop their mouths, and carry conviction to their understandings, is to bring their tenets to some fundamental doctrine of the gospel which is mutually allowed to be infallibly true, and determine whether their peculiar notions agree or disagree with it. I presume my brethren in the ministry have often found this to be the only method to stop the mouths of vain talkers and gainsayers. And all polemical writers of eminence have successfully employed this method, to refute their most candid, ingenious and learned adversaries. A systematical knowledge of the essential doctrines of the gospel arms a preacher at all points, to meet, repel and convince those, who propagate opinions that are false and fatal to the souls of men. In this view, it is extremely important that those who are preparing for the ministry, at this day of abounding error, should be well versed in the gospel system of sound divinity.

Fifthly: A systematical knowledge of the gospel is no less necessary, in order to qualify pious young men to preach both the doctrines and duties of Christianity, in the most plain, instructive and profitable manner. To instruct his hearers ought to be the constant aim of the preacher; for unless they are instructed, they cannot be profited by his preaching. But, in order to preach instructively from time to time, his mind must be fraught with a rich fund of theological knowledge, which is well digested and fit for use. Christ said, "Every Scribe

which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth out of his treasure things new and old." And Paul said to Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." To become a preacher of this character, a young man must be able to distinguish one doctrine of the gospel from another, one duty of the gospel from another, and one Christian grace from another; and to preach upon each Christian doctrine, each religious duty, and each gracious affection, with clearness and consistency; so as to make every hearer see his own character, and feel his own obligation to be and do what God requires. But no preacher can thus rightly divide the word of truth, and feed his people with knowledge and understanding, without having a systematical knowledge of the doctrinal and practical truths of the gospel. A minister may preach ten, or twenty, or forty years, and always preach a new sermon upon a new text; and yet leave his people as ignorant of his own sentiments, and of the peculiar doctrines and duties of Christianity, as they were when they heard him preach his first sermon. There is a certain superficial, desultory manner of preaching about the Bible, and about the most peculiar and precious truths contained in it, which may please, but cannot enlighten, convince, convert, nor edify a people. Some may adopt this mode of preaching from one cause, and some from another. Some may preach so, with a view to please their people. Some may preach so, for the purpose of concealing their sentiments. And some may preach so, because they have no consistent scheme of sentiments digested in their own minds. This last is probably the most common cause of uninstructive, unimpressive, and unprofitable preaching. The regular artificer acts as systematically in framing the plainest, as the most complicated and curious parts of a large and elegant edifice. So the preacher, who is a workman, treats one subject as systematically as another, whether it be sentimental or practical. All the duties of the gospel are founded upon the doctrines of the gospel, and ought to be explained and inculcated upon gospel principles. I would not, however, be understood to mean that a minister ought always, or even generally, to preach doctrinally, in distinction from preaching practically and experimentally. If, however, a young man begins to preach upon the duties of the gospel, he will be very apt to neglect preaching upon the doctrines of the gospel. But if he begins to preach upon the doctrines of the gospel, he will naturally be led to preach upon the duties of the gospel. The reason is, the duties of the gospel naturally flow from the doctrines of the gospel, and come in

course in preaching upon them; but the doctrines of the gospel do not naturally flow from the duties of the gospel, nor come in course in preaching upon them. If a child begins to read before he has learned to spell, he will be very loath to go back and learn what he ought to have learned. So, if a young man at first forms a habit of preaching practically, he will find a peculiar reluctance and difficulty in forming a habit of preaching sentimentally afterwards. But if he sets out in preaching sentimentally, he will naturally go forward and preach practically and usefully. Indeed, this is the course which he will spontaneously pursue, if he has previously acquired a systematical knowledge of the gospel; for he will clearly perceive the propriety and importance of preaching all Christian doctrines and duties in their proper order, harmony and connection. We feel no hazard, therefore, in asserting that a systematical knowledge of the gospel is as necessary in order to form a plain, practical and profitable preacher, as to form a consistent, thorough and deep divine.

It now remains to point out some things which seem naturally to flow from the subject which we have been considering; and which appear both important in themselves, and appropriate to the present occasion.

The first thing suggested by the subject is, that there can be no reasonable objection against all human systems of divinity. These are very much decried and condemned at the present day, as not only useless, but even detrimental to the cause of truth. Many declaim against all bodies of divinity, whether they contain doctrines, in their view, either scriptural or unscriptural. But if it be desirable and important, to have clear, distinct, and consistent ideas of the first principles of the oracles of God, then it seems equally desirable and necessary, to have these first principles linked into the form of systems, summaries, or confessions of faith. The great and primary truths of Christianity are as capable of being systematized, as the primary principles of any other art or science. And it is hardly conceivable that any man, who really desires to understand the holy scriptures, should not desire to see the primary and most important truths contained in the Bible, collected and digested into a harmonious and consistent system. This has certainly been the general desire of all denominations of christians. It is well known that there were systems of divinity, or formularies of faith, composed in the early days of Christianity, and they have always been continued in use ever since. The first reformers from Popery published their creeds and confessions of faith. The Episcopalians in England drew up and established thirty-nine articles. Those who dissented from

that church, formed the Assembly's Catechism. And all sectarians of any note have gone into the same practice. But here, perhaps, it is more proper to remove objections, than to advance arguments.

It is said, that systems of divinity tend to promote religious controversies, which are highly prejudicial to practical religion. But it is very evident, that they do not give rise to religious disputes, because religious disputes have always given rise to them. If christians had never differed in their religious opinions, they would never have had occasion to throw their peculiar sentiments into the form of a system. The truth is, systems of divinity have been generally composed for the very purpose of putting a stop to religious controversies, and of uniting christians in believing and speaking the same things upon religious subjects.

It is said, that systems of divinity tend to prevent men from forming any real opinions of their own, and to infringe upon their right of private judgment. This consequence no more flows from reading systematical writings, than from reading any other books, or attending upon any other theological instructions. The reason is, that a man's opinions are as much his own if he derives them from another, as if he derives them from his own research or examination. No man can be said to have a real opinion upon any subject, which is not derived from evidence; and if it be derived from evidence, it is totally immaterial whether he derives the evidence from his own investigation, or from conversation, or from reading, or from public or private instruction. Did Timothy's reading the scriptures when he was a child, and his hearing the apostle preach and converse afterwards, infringe upon his right of private judgment, or prevent his forming his own system of sound words?

It is said, that systems of divinity are often the engines of designing men, and intended to propagate error, instead of truth. It is not denied, that theological systems may have been designed and employed, to serve such an evil purpose. But it must be acknowledged, on the other hand, that they may have been designed and employed to counteract the baneful influence of error, and to promote the cause of truth. It is indeed, difficult to ascertain exactly what influence ancient systems of divinity had upon the primitive churches; but we have good evidence, that more modern theological creeds and systems have had a very extensive and salutary influence upon the interests of pure Christianity. The systems, which were formed at, and after the reformation from Popery, have done signal service to the Protestant world. The Thirty-nine Articles

of the Episcopal church have been a great barrier against the gross and fatal errors, which have been embraced and propagated by great and learned divines in England. This opinion of systems is now fast reviving and spreading among the most evangelical and useful theologians in the British nation: I mean the authors and patrons of the Christian Observer. These men are zealously engaged in opposing the perverters of the true sense of the Thirty-nine Articles. It must be allowed that the Assembly's Catechism has had a great influence in forming the religious sentiments of the people in New England; and many will believe, that its influence has been as good as it has been great and extensive. All that can be justly said in this case is, that the best things may be perverted; but this is not valid reason for condemning and rejecting the best things. No man, I believe, ever has formed, or ever can form a consistent scheme or system of divinity from the Bible alone, without the aid of some systematical writer, or instructer. It is devoutly to be wished, that neither systems of divinity, nor creeds and confessions of faith, should be indiscriminately and universally discarded; but that they should be duly estimated, and properly improved. Again,

If the leading sentiment in this discourse has been sufficiently supported, we must conclude that it is generally improper for those to undertake to preach the gospel, who have never acquired a systematical knowledge of it. There have been a great many instances of lay preachers. Some have gone from the plow, some from the shop, some from the counter, some from the lancet, and some from the bar, to the desk. This has been commonly owing to a low opinion of the gospel, or to a high opinion of themselves. We have no doubt, however, but that many of these lay preachers have been well meaning men; we have no doubt but that some of them have been possessed of superior talents and learning; and we have no doubt but that in some instances, they have been useful and distinguished ministers and divines. But such instances have been very rare, and will not justify us in approving and encouraging self taught teachers in general. They are commonly destitute of clear and comprehensive views of the gospel, and convey more heat than light, to their hearers. Nor is this the worst; for we have reason to fear, that they sometimes endeavor to make others, as well as themselves believe, that they are supernaturally taught and assisted; and under this impression, they have often led their votaries into the most absurd and dangerous error, superstition, and enthusiasm. Nor have more ingenious and learned laymen done less injury to true religion. Relying upon their classical, phi-

losophical and metaphysical knowledge, they have often employed their superior abilities in opposing and corrupting the most essential doctrines of the gospel. Such ingenious, self-taught, self sufficient novices in divinity may be found not only in Europe, but in America, and even in Massachusetts. These men seem to forget, that preaching is an art, and an art which requires to be as distinctly, learnedly, and systematically studied, as any other art or science; and that the knowledge of any other art or science will not prepare a man, of the best heart and of the best talents, to preach the gospel plainly and profitably. It is one thing to exhort, and another to preach; it is one thing to learn the words, and another to learn the doctrines of scripture; it is one thing to know the gospel as a christian, and another to know it as a divine. This idea ought to be deeply impressed upon the minds of all pious young men, who are looking forward to the great work of the gospel ministry.

In the view of this subject, we may learn how such young men ought to begin their theological studies. Professor Campbell, in his ingenious and elegant Lectures on Systematic Theology, recommends to his students in divinity, to begin their theological studies by reading, collating, and criticising upon the scriptures without the aid of human systems, commentaries, and polemical writings. After discarding the term orthodox, as unmeaning and absurd, he represents his pupil as inquiring: "Would you then lay aside systems altogether, as useless, or even dangerous?" He replies: "By no means. But I am not for beginning with them." He goes on: "But then it will be said, If the scriptures are to be our first study, will it not be necessary that, even in reading them, we take the aid of some able commentator? Perhaps I shall appear somewhat singular in my way of thinking, when I tell you in reply, that I would not have you at first recur to them. Do not mistake me, as though I meant to signify that there is no good to be had from commentaries. I am far from judging thus of commentaries in general, any more than of systems. But neither are proper for the beginner, whose object it is impartially to search out the mind of the Spirit, and not to imbibe the scheme of any dogmatist. But in reading the scriptures, when difficulties occur, what are we to do, or what can we do better, than immediately recur to some eminent interpreter? Perhaps the answer I am going to give, will appear astonishing, as I know it is unusual. If you are not able with the strictest attention and reflection to solve the difficulty yourself, do not make it a rule to seek an immediate solution of it from some other quarter. Have patience; and as you grow acquainted with the scope of the whole

by frequent and attentive reading, you will daily find fewer difficulties; they will vanish of themselves. The more perspicuous parts will insensibly reflect a light upon the more obscure. If you have the helps to be obtained from history, geography, the knowledge of the manners and polity of the people, which in effect are perfectly coincident with the study of the language, and which may be all comprehended in these two sources, *sacred history and biblical philology*, you will be daily fitter for being interpreters yourselves." Now, I readily grant that it would be proper for young men to begin their theological studies as the learned Professor proposes, if classical and biblical knowledge be all that is necessary in order to understand the doctrines of divine revelation. But this cannot be conceded. The knowledge of sacred history and biblical philology is very different from the proper knowledge of divinity. The knowledge of the technical terms in physic is very different from the proper knowledge of the medical art. The knowledge of the technical terms in law is very different from the knowledge of the law itself. Though a young man should learn not only the languages in which the Bible was originally written, but all the customs, manners, laws and religions of the various nations to which the sacred writers often allude; yet this knowledge would be very different from the proper knowledge of divinity, which essentially consists in the knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of divine revelation. The study of sacred history and biblical philology is rather a preparation for the study of divinity, than the study of divinity itself. It is hardly proper to say that a young man begins to study divinity, until he begins to study the first principles of the oracles of God in a systematical manner; and the most ingenious and best classical scholar will find himself incompetent to study divinity systematically, without the aid of some systematical writer, or systematical instructer.

In the next place: It appears from what has been said, that both an academical and theological education is highly necessary to qualify pious young men for the work of the ministry. The knowledge of the arts and siences, of civil and ecclesiastial history, as well as a skill in the learned languages, is absolutely requisite to form an accomplished preacher. But it is however a serious question, whether young students in divinity may not pay too much attention to scientific and biblical learning, to the neglect of more important theological knowledge. This species of learning is rather ornamental than useful, to ministers in general. It is true, indeed, they may sometimes find it to be of peculiar advantage in meeting their learned adversaries, and repelling them with their own weapons. But I

believe that every scriptural doctrine of importance may be discovered, understood and maintained, without much critical learning. Dr. Brown, in his remarks upon the Earl of Shaftsbury's Characteristics, challenges him to produce any translation of the Bible, which does not fairly contain all the great and essential doctrines of divine revelation. If this be true, it seems that classical and biblical knowledge is not so absolutely necessary for a preacher as some have represented. Besides, sacred criticism has no end. It opens a field too wide for any man completely to traverse. How many volumes of criticism have been written upon these words?— "There are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." But after all that has been said, by the ablest critics, for and against the authenticity of this passage, both sides are obliged to sit down in a degree of darkness and doubt. I would not, however, discourage young students in divinity from acquiring biblical knowledge; but I would have them reflect, that this alone will never make them profound divines. In order to arrive at this attainment, they must acquire theological as well as classical knowledge. They have as much need of studying theology, after they have gone through their classical studies, in order to prepare themselves for the work of the ministry, as other young men have of studying law, or physic, after they have left the university, in order to prepare themselves for either of these professions. Many pious and ingenious young men have gone almost immediately from the college to the pulpit. But I doubt not but they have often regretted their rashness and precipitancy. It has probably prevented the usefulness of some, and injured the health, if not destroyed the lives of others. It is of the last importance, that those young men who are looking forward to the ministry, should possess that human and divine knowledge, which is previously necessary to render them both able and faithful ministers of the New Testament.

The whole train of the observations which have been made in this discourse, now converge to a single point; and unitedly press the important duty of assisting pious and promising youths, to furnish their minds with that literary and theological knowledge which is indispensably necessary to prepare them for the gospel ministry. Among the numerous young men who are annually finishing their public education, the great majority are destitute of the first and most essential qualification for the sacred office and accordingly they choose to turn their attention to what they deem more reputable and lucrative employments. This has, at length, awakened the public attention to the importance of aiding indigent youths of promising

piety and talents, in qualifying themselves to preach the gospel of Christ, and promote the salvation of sinners. A society was formed several years ago, consisting of numerous branches, for the purpose of sending preachers among the poor Pagans in the Eastern world. That society has been very industrious and successful in obtaining large sums from the generous public, to assist them in pursuing their pious and important object. But whoever seriously and impartially considers the present state of our own nation, in respect to a famine of the word, will be fully convinced that able and faithful ministers are as much needed in this country, as in any other quarter of the globe. If the calculations which have been lately made, respecting the vast numbers in this land who are destitute of the preaching and ordinances of the gospel, be just, or very nearly just, there is a loud call for the increase of faithful laborers in this part of the vineyard of Christ. We cannot reasonably expect to be properly supplied with scribes well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, unless great and peculiar exertions are made to assist indigent youth of real piety and good abilities, to furnish themselves for the great and good work in which they ardently wish to be employed. We, my brethren, have weighty motives, to pursue with ardor and zeal the very benevolent and important design in which we have voluntarily engaged. And among many other motives, it is a very consoling and animating one, that we are united with the Parent Society, in promoting an object of vast magnitude which does not militate against the Bible Societies, the Tract Societies, the Moral Societies, or the Massachusetts Missionary Society; but which directly tends to carry into effect all their benevolent purposes. And though it should divert or lessen some of the great and numerous streams of public charity, which have been flowing into the wide channel of the Foreign Missionary Society; yet it must greatly assist the members of that respectable body, by raising up the best qualified instruments to carry their great design into effect. Besides, we must suppose that they have no wish to neglect our destitute brethren, for the sake of sending the gospel to those far distant nations; from whom European christians have derived, and are still deriving their exorbitant wealth; and to whom they are under peculiar obligations to send the gospel. It is of the first importance, that we should evangelize the heathen in our own country, and others who are fast falling into a more deplorable condition than ignorant and unbelieving Pagans. When those who have had a Christian education apostatize, and become infidels, they are generally more malignant enemies to the gospel and the cause of Christ, than the most benighted and bigoted heathens. Let us then lift up our

eyes, and look on the fields, which are white already to the harvest. Let us hear the voice of millions of our countrymen, who are calling upon us, with the utmost importunity, to raise up, and qualify, and send faithful laborers among them. Though we are, at present, weak in numbers and in wealth, and must move very slowly in our benevolent exertions, yet we may lay a firm and permanent foundation for the most beneficial and extensive effects, for years and ages to come. Our fathers spared no pains nor expense, to provide for us a learned and faithful ministry; and shall not this consideration inspire us with a pious and noble ambition to follow their example, and to do all in our power for the instruction and salvation of those who are coming after us? The God of our fathers, in answer to their prayers, has increased our numbers, our wealth, and our civil, religious and literary advantages as a nation, above all human calculations; by which he has laid us under the most endearing obligations of gratitude, to him and to them, to promote his cause, which lay the nearest to their hearts. We have come upon the stage in the most eventful period in the history of man. The widest field for usefulness is open before us, which invites, solicits and demands our most vigorous and benevolent exertions, in the most glorious and important cause that ever engaged the attention of this, or any other nation. While error, superstition, idolatry and infidelity have laid waste the churches of Christ in the old world, we are imperiously called upon to cherish and maintain the sinking cause of Zion, among a people who have been saved of the Lord for the very purpose, we hope, of preparing the way for the universal spread of holiness and happiness among the many millions of our guilty race, who are perishing for the lack of vision. Is it not a privilege to employ our time, our labor, our property, and our prayerful influence, in coöperating with our fellow christians, in spreading the Redeemer's kingdom, and bringing home many sons unto glory? To beg, I am ashamed; but I am bold in obedience to the apostle, to "charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good; that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Amen.

SERMON XXI.

RATIONAL PREACHING.

And Paul as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures. — Acts, xvii. 2.

Paul was a chosen vessel to carry the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles in various and distant parts of the world. For this great and arduous work he was eminently qualified. He was a man of genius, learning, eloquence and piety. Longinus, a learned heathen, ranks Paul of Tarsus among the most eminent of the Grecian and Roman orators; and Christian writers have not been sparing in their encomiums upon his piety and eloquence. But, from some motives or other, they have seldom celebrated his reasoning powers and the use he made of them in preaching the gospel. The inspired writer of his life, however, more frequently mentions his reasoning, than his declaiming, on the doctrines he taught. Speaking of Paul and Silas passing through Amphipolis, and Apollonia, and coming to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews, he says, "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures; opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." The truth, which here lies upon the face of the text, and which is proposed as the subject of the ensuing discourse is this:

That Paul usually proved the truth of the doctrines which he taught.

I shall first show that he did this; and then why he did it.

I. We are to consider, that Paul usually proved the truth of

the doctrines which he taught. He did not desire his hearers to believe any thing which he asserted, without evidence. It seems, by what is said in the eleventh verse of the context, that he commended the noble Bereans, for searching the scriptures, to see whether the doctrines which they heard him preach, were agreeable to that infallible standard. He usually preached on the great and essential doctrines of the gospel, which he knew ought to be proved by plain and conclusive reasoning. To reason fairly, is to draw fair consequences from true premises; or to adduce clear and conclusive arguments in support of truth. In order to reason clearly and intelligibly upon the truth of a proposition, it is often necessary, in the first place to explain it; in the next place to produce arguments in support of it; and lastly to answer objections against it. By Paul's proving the doctrines which he taught, we are to understand his reasoning upon them in this manner. And if we now examine his general mode of preaching, we shall find that he usually proved the particular doctrine which he preached, by explaining it, if it needed explanation; by bringing arguments to support it, if it needed to be supported; and by answering objections, if he supposed any would occur to the mind of the hearer. This will appear in respect to a variety of subjects upon which he preached.

When he preached upon the existence of God, he reasoned plainly and forcibly upon the subject. Hear his arguments in support of this first and fundamental doctrine of all religion. Speaking of the Pagans, who deny the existence of the only living and true God, and neglect to worship him, he says, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." But he argued more largely upon this doctrine, in his discourse to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers at Athens. "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious; for as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God, that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him,

though he be not far from every one of us. For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said. For we are his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." This clear, concise, and conclusive reasoning was perfectly adapted to prove the being and perfections of God, and the indispensable duty of the Pagans to know, to love, and to serve him.

Paul reasoned as plainly and forcibly upon the doctrine of divine sovereignty, in electing and saving some and not others. "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" Here Paul stated, or explained his subject, proved his subject, and answered the most plausible objection that could be made against it.

Paul taught the doctrine of total depravity, and proved it by plain and conclusive reasoning. He first proved this doctrine from a long and particular account of the character and conduct of all the heathen world; and then from the authority of the Old Testament, in which the total depravity of the Jews is plainly asserted. He says, "What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one," &c.

When Paul preached to the Jews and Greeks at Thessalonica, he undertook to prove that Christ had come into the world, suffered, and died, and risen from the dead. This is related in our text and context. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures; opening and alleging," that is, explaining and proving, "that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is

Christ." Paul, in his preaching, not only asserted that Christ was the long expected and promised Messiah, that he had suffered and died, and that he had risen from the dead; but he proved these points, and so demonstrated that Christ was the only and all-sufficient Redeemer.

In treating on the resurrection and future state of the righteous, Paul reasoned with great perspicuity and energy. Some of the Corinthians denied this doctrine, which made it necessary to prove it; which he did, in this long and forcible train of reasoning. "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." He goes on in this strain till he starts and answers an objection. "But some men will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat, or some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." Finally he says, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Thus philosophically and scripturally the apostle reasoned upon the resurrection of the body, and the immortality of the soul.

When Paul preached before Felix, "he reasoned" so plainly and forcibly "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," that "Felix trembled." Immediately after he was converted and baptized, he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God; and reasoned so clearly and conclusively on the subject, that he confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. After he came from Athens to Corinth, and found a certain Jew named Aquila, he abode with him there. And we are told, that he there "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." He continued preaching in this manner to the Corinthians a year and six months; but at length he came to Ephesus, where he entered into the synagogue, and reasoned

with the Jews in his public discourses; "speaking boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." I trust it now appears evident to every one, that Paul usually reasoned in his preaching; and fairly proved the truth of the important doctrines which he publicly taught and inculcated. I now proceed to show,

II. Why he made it his common practice to prove the doctrines upon which he treated. He did not adopt this mode of preaching because he supposed it would be the most pleasing to his hearers, nor because he was not capable of preaching in a more agreeable manner: But,

1. Because he meant to preach the gospel plainly and intelligibly to persons of all characters and capacities. He says to the Romans, "I am a debtor, both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians, both to the wise, and to the unwise." And he says to the Corinthians, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." The apostle very well knew, that in order to preach the great, the deep, and important doctrines of the gospel plainly and intelligibly to all descriptions of men, it was necessary to explain those doctrines, that they might be clearly and distinctly understood; and in the next place, to prove them to be true, that they might be believed; and in many cases, to answer objections, that the mouths of gainsayers might be stopped. All preachers ought to be teachers; and all teachers find it necessary to explain and prove what they teach, and to remove all objections which naturally occur to the minds of those they teach. It is impossible to preach the gospel so as to be clearly and easily understood, without explaining particular doctrines, and distinguishing one from another; and it is no less impossible to lead men to believe any particular doctrine after it is explained, without producing plain and powerful arguments in support of it; and removing every plausible objection against it. The apostle knew, that men are reasonable creatures, and capable of perceiving the force of plain reasoning; and therefore he made it his common practice, to address the understandings of his hearers, and to prove the doctrines he taught, that they might believe them upon just and solid ground. He positively declared, "In the church, I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by

my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." He made a point of preaching argumentatively, for the important purpose of preaching plainly and intelligibly.

2. He commonly proved the doctrines he taught, because he meant to preach profitably, as well as plainly. He often assigns this good reason for his preaching so sentimentally and argumentatively. He solemnly declares to the elders of Ephesus, that he had meant to preach to them profitably, or in a manner best calculated to promote their spiritual and eternal good. He says, "Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you; but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house; testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." He declared to the Corinthians, that he had not sought his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved. "For we are not as many, who corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ. Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." The apostle knew that it was entirely out of his power, by preaching, to change or sanctify the hearts of his hearers. This he freely acknowledged. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." But yet he knew, that by preaching the truth plainly and convincingly, he should certainly do God, if not man, service. He says, "Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life." All that preachers have to do, is, to pour light into the understanding, and conviction into the conscience, by the manifestation of divine truth. It is only through the medium of the understanding and the conscience, that preachers of the gospel can reach and affect the hearts of the hearers. But in this way, they can deeply affect them, and prove greatly instrumental, in saving,

or destroying them. It is of as much importance, therefore, that they should in their preaching approve themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, as if they could change his heart. Accordingly the apostle made it his practice, by lucid explanation, plain reasoning, and solid arguments, to exhibit the great and essential doctrines of the gospel before the understanding and consciences of men, in the clearest and strongest light; because he knew that this was the most profitable mode of preaching, and would certainly produce some important effects under a divine influence, and such as would be most pleasing to God. Now, if the apostle commonly preached the gospel argumentatively, for the purpose of preaching it most plainly and profitably, he certainly had good reasons for his peculiar mode of preaching; and far better reasons than any can have for preaching in any different manner.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from Paul's usual mode of preaching, that he was, in the most strict and proper sense of the term, a metaphysical preacher. He preached argumentatively, and drew just consequences from true premises. He employed fair reasoning and argumentation, in preaching upon the great doctrines and duties of the gospel. And fair reasoning upon any subject is precisely the same thing as metaphysical reasoning; or at any rate, fair reasoning upon any metaphysical subject, is metaphysical reasoning; and any deep, difficult, profound subject is properly a metaphysical subject. And taking the term, metaphysical reasoning, in this strictest sense, Paul employed metaphysical reasoning in his preaching. For, in the first place, he usually preached upon metaphysical subjects, which required the exercise of the highest reasoning powers of man. He preached upon the existence of God, the perfections of God, the decrees of God, the sovereignty of God, the agency of God in the production of moral exercises in the human heart, the free agency of man under a divine agency, the divinity of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the nature of moral virtue or true holiness, the nature and extent of moral depravity in the human heart, the nature and necessity of regeneration or change of heart by a special divine influence, the perseverance of saints, the dissolution of the body at death, the future resurrection of the body, and the immortality of the soul in a future state. These are the most difficult, most profound, and most important subjects that any natural philosopher, moral philosopher, metaphysician, or divine, ever presumed to reason upon. As he usually preached upon these deep and essential doctrines of

the gospel, so he preached upon them metaphysically, that is, he reasoned upon them. He did not merely preach about them, or declaim upon them; but he explained them, proved them, and refuted the most plausible objections ever made against them. Let any minister, at this day, commonly preach upon the same subjects, and in the same manner that Paul did, and he will be called a metaphysical preacher, by those who generally preach upon different subjects, in a different manner; and by those who are pleased with such a different mode of preaching. And we must allow, that they are perfectly correct in calling any minister a metaphysical preacher, who preaches sentimentally and argumentatively, as Paul did.

2. If Paul preached upon such subjects, and in such a manner as has been represented, in order to preach in the most plain and profitable manner; then none have any good reason to speak reproachfully of his manner of preaching. We must believe that he was sincere in his profession to preach plainly and profitably; and we must believe also, that he chose the best method of preaching plainly and profitably. But if this be true, who can have any ground to complain or speak reproachfully of his mode of preaching? It is certainly very unreasonable to find fault with the very best mode of preaching. But we know that both the matter and manner of his preaching were highly displeasing to many who heard him. And though few, at this day, would be willing to say that they dislike Paul's preaching, yet many are very free to say that they dislike the same kind and mode of preaching. When any ministers generally preach upon the same subjects and in the same manner that Paul did, they reproachfully call them metaphysical preachers, and their preaching metaphysical preaching. Both ministers and people lift up a loud and united voice against what they call metaphysical preaching. We can scarcely hear or read an ordination sermon, which does not contain some severe and contemptuous remarks upon either metaphysical preachers, or metaphysical preaching. Let us now candidly inquire whether there can be any just ground to speak contemptuously of the best mode of preaching, which the best human preacher, for the best reasons, adopted.

Some may say that Christ did not preach metaphysically, but only taught plain, practical doctrines, without reasoning upon them, or attempting to prove them by a train of connected arguments; and therefore ministers should follow his example, and preach plainly and practically, as he did; and not presume to preach upon deep metaphysical subjects in a metaphysical manner. Ans: There is reason to think that Paul felt his obligation to follow the example of Christ, as much as any preacher

of the gospel ever did. And so far as he deviated from Christ's example in preaching, he acted from pure and proper motives. And it is easy to see a good reason why Christ did not undertake to prove the doctrines he taught, for he taught as one having authority that none ought to dispute. It was sufficient for him to assert, or to command, or forbid, by his own divine authority. But neither Paul, nor any other human preacher, is clothed with such authority.

Some may say that those who preach upon the same metaphysical subjects in the same metaphysical manner that Paul did, do not preach plainly and practically; and therefore are unprofitable preachers. But if Paul was a plain and profitable preacher, why should not those, who follow his example, be plain and profitable preachers? And what is the language of well known facts in this case. Are not those, who preach upon the same subjects and in the same manner that Paul did, as plain and profitable preachers, as those who studiously avoid preaching upon the same subjects and in the same manner that the apostle did? Who generally preach the most plainly, instructively, profitably, and successfully; those who are called metaphysical, or those who are called anti-metaphysical preachers? No preacher ever exhibited more truth, more plainly, profitably, and successfully, than the apostle Paul. He surpassed all the other apostles in both the manner, matter, and success of his preaching. He was instrumental of turning thousands, if not millions, of mankind from darkness to light, and from the delusions of Satan unto God. And still his mode of preaching is every where spoken against, both by preachers and people, but more generally by preachers who are afraid of being reproached for metaphysical preaching; though it is utterly impossible to allege one solid objection against his mode of preaching; which was the best calculated to answer the best and most important ends of preaching the gospel.

3. If Paul, for good reasons, chose and adopted the very best mode of preaching, then no other reason can be assigned for disliking and reproaching it, but a dislike to the precious and important doctrines of the gospel, which his mode of preaching exhibits in the clearest and strongest light. And this is the very cause which those who dislike and reprobate it, either indirectly or directly show to be the cause of their disapprobation and reproach. Some ministers show this to be the cause of their disapprobation, by neglecting to preach upon the same subjects and in the same manner that the apostle did; and others, by openly and boldly preaching against the doctrines which he preached, and the manner of his preaching them. And people manifest their disapprobation by saying they love to have it

so, and by choosing to have such preachers. Now it is easy to see, whenever both ministers and people generally unite in disliking the doctrines that Paul preached, and his manner of preaching them, that metaphysical preachers will be neglected, or opposed, or set aside. And whenever there are none, or but very few, who dare to go into a synagogue, or house of public worship, and reason three Sabbaths, or three months, or a year and six months, upon the great and essential doctrines of the gospel, as Paul did; a wide door will be opened for the propagation and spread of gross and fatal religious error among all classes of people. It is no small, venial evil, for either ministers or people to speak reproachfully and contemptuously of metaphysical preaching, for the real purpose of bringing the essential and fundamental doctrines of the gospel into contempt. No person, who loves these doctrines, is ever displeased in hearing them explained, proved, and set in the strongest light by preachers. It is not metaphysical preaching, but the doctrines metaphysically preached, that are so much disliked, opposed and reproached. When we hear either preachers or people speak against metaphysical preaching, we need to be at no loss what their meaning or design is, or what consequences will flow from their artful and pernicious conduct. They employ the smoothest, easiest, and most effectual method to prevent the spread of truth, and promote the spread of error, that ever has been, or can be employed. Such deceivers are extremely dangerous, and their artifice ought to be exposed, condemned, and resisted by all preachers and lovers of the truth.

4. If Paul preached plainly, in order to preach profitably, then other ministers ought to preach plainly, for the same important purpose. Paul's plain preaching offended and disaffected many of his hearers. But this did not prevent his preaching plainly; for his design in preaching was not to please men, but to profit them, and please God. So he said to the Galatians, who had forsaken him and followed false teachers. "I marvel, that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." If Paul could not please both God and man, by preaching divine truths plainly, then, no other ministers can expect to please both God

and man by plain preaching. But as Paul chose to please God and profit men, by preaching plainly, rather than to please men to their own destruction; so ministers ought to make the same choice, and preach in the same manner; and leave the event to God, whether the truth they deliver shall be a savor of life unto life or a savor of death unto death to their hearers. Plain and profitable preaching will always produce one or the other of these important effects. Paul was willing to please men in every thing, except neglecting to preach truth plainly; and all ministers should be willing to do the one, and not the other. No preacher in the world can find a solid excuse for not preaching plainly and profitably, through fear of offending, or a desire of pleasing men. This, in many cases, is an extremely great trial. For by preaching plainly and profitably, many ministers have lost both the favor and support of their people; and involved themselves in great, distressing, and lasting temporal evils. But though such calamities may be foreseen, in consequence of ministers' preaching plainly and faithfully, they have no right to shrink from the trial; but feel and say with the apostle, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

5. If ministers ought to preach plainly and profitably, as Paul did, then people ought to approve of their preaching in such a manner, though it be not pleasing to their natural hearts. People have no right to desire preachers to seek to please them simply, but they ought to desire them to seek to save them. How thankful have many been who have been recovered from the delusions of false teachers to the knowledge of the great and saving truths of the gospel, by plain and profitable preaching? Thousands, whom Paul instrumentally turned from Pagan and fatal delusions, were ready to give him their eyes, for joy. People never desire their physicians to please them at the risk of their life; and it is no less criminal and absurd, to desire their ministers to please them at the risk of their eternal salvation. But how many at this day, are running after false teachers, who are crying Peace, peace, to them, while they are standing on the brink of endless destruction! Such persons will not so much as give a hearing to plain and profitable preaching, and endeavor to prevent others from hearing it. Their folly will sooner or later be made manifest.

6. This subject calls upon all to inquire, whether they approve or disapprove of plain and profitable preaching. There is nothing more sensibly affects the heart than preaching; and therefore there is nothing, which has a greater tendency to discover

to every person, whether his heart is good, or bad, than his feelings under preaching; whether the preaching be good or bad. To be pleased with bad preaching, is one of the surest marks of a bad heart; and to be pleased with good preaching, is one of the surest marks of a good heart. You have all had an opportunity to hear both bad and good preaching; now let me ask, Which has been the most pleasing? Your feelings are a mark to yourselves, if you never express them to others; and they are a mark to others, if you express them. How ready are people to express their feelings in respect to preaching; not considering that they thereby expose both their understanding and hearts! Be entreated then to examine your feelings, for your own benefit, and for the benefit of others.

SERMON XXII.

AVOWAL OF RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS.

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers; believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets. — Acts, xxiv. 14.

After Paul returned from Greece to Jerusalem, he went into the temple to preach; but the Asiatic Jews stirred up all the people and laid hands on him, and would have killed him, if the chief captain had not taken him out of their hands and led him to the castle. When he came upon the stairs, he requested and obtained leave of the captain to make his defence before the people. After this, the chief captain carried him before the Sanhedrim, the highest ecclesiastical court in the nation. In pleading before them, he so wisely managed his cause as to disunite them in opinion; which defeated their design to condemn him. But though the council dismissed him, yet a number of the people conspired against him, and bound themselves by an oath, that they would not eat nor drink till they had slain him. When this was made known to the chief captain, he sent a band of soldiers to conduct him in safety to Felix, the governor. Felix immediately sent to Jerusalem for Ananias, with the elders, to come and exhibit their complaints against Paul. When they were come, they employed one Tertullus, an orator, to be their advocate. He opened their cause with peculiar address, and exhibited their complaints. After the governor had heard them, he beckoned to Paul to make a reply. In his reply he absolutely denied the charges which had been alleged against him. But he turned to the governor and said, "This I confess unto thee, that after the way, which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers; believing all

things which are written in the law and the prophets." Paul was not ashamed of the gospel which he preached, nor afraid to profess his belief of its great and essential doctrines; though he knew they were called, by the greatest men in the nation, an absurd and fatal heresy. Hence we conclude,

That those who preach the true doctrines of the gospel, are not afraid to avow their religious sentiments; though they know that they are called heresy by others.

I. I shall show that the true doctrines of the gospel are very often called heresy; and,

II. Show why those who preach them are not afraid to avow their religious sentiments.

I. I am to show that the true doctrines of the gospel are very often called heresy.

The gospel was essentially preached to Adam; and from Adam to Abraham; and from Abraham to Moses; and from Moses to Christ. But through all that long tract of time, it was generally misunderstood and misrepresented by all the heathen nations, and by many who professed to acknowledge its truth and divinity. When Christ came and preached the gospel with greater purity and plainness, not only the Gentiles but the Jews disbelieved, misrepresented, and rejected it. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees hated and opposed him; and finally put him to death, for preaching the plain and important truths of the gospel. And wherever the apostles preached the same doctrines, they were generally represented by Jews and Gentiles, as a mean and contemptible sect, who propagated gross heresies and delusions. Tertullus in his plea against Paul, said, "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world; and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes." As Christ was brought up in Nazareth, an obscure place, his enemies reproachfully called him a Nazarene, and his followers Nazarenes; and Paul a ring-leader of that despicable sect. And when Paul came to Rome and called upon christians to come and see him, "They said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came, showed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: For as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against." James and Stephen were early put to death by the Jews, for preaching the gospel in Judea; and the other apostles, who went round the world preaching the gospel to Jews and Pagans, were every where opposed, abused, and finally persecuted unto death. The primitive christians suffered no less than ten bloody persecutions. And ever since those times, such christians as have embraced

and maintained the pure doctrines of the gospel, have been more or less opposed and persecuted by heathens and by multitudes, who professed to believe the gospel. The Sabellians, Arians, and Socinians were the earliest sectarians that arose in the church in the third and fourth centuries, who disbelieved and denied some of the essential doctrines of the gospel. Since their day a flood of sectarians have sprung up in the Christian world, who have opposed, misrepresented, and denied some or all of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Among nominal christians at the present time, there are Antinomians, Arminians, Methodists, Universalists, and Unitarians, besides a number of minor sectarians, who unite in calling the pure doctrines of the gospel, which Paul preached, gross heresies, if not blasphemies. Though the ministers in New England generally profess to believe and maintain the same doctrines, which their fathers who planted these churches, professed and maintained, yet many of them do not preach the same doctrines, nor approve of others who do preach them. There are, indeed, some who preach the same doctrines, plainly and fully, that Paul preached, and that the first ministers in New England preached; but they are every where spoken against in names and terms of reproach; and represented as an ignorant and bigoted sect, who ought to be rejected and avoided by every religious society. It appears from the whole current of sacred and ecclesiastical history, that the prophets, Christ, the apostles, and their successors in the ministry, who have preached the same pure doctrines of the gospel that they preached, have always been considered and represented, by the great majority of mankind, as propagators of error, delusion, and heresy.

But though the doctrines of the cross have been so generally hated, opposed and misrepresented, yet the faithful ministers of the gospel have never been afraid to avow their religious sentiments; and to preach them, plainly, before an unbelieving and frowning world. Paul was not afraid to acknowledge before the Roman governor and the whole Jewish council, that he embraced and taught the pure doctrines of the gospel, though he knew that they were every where spoken against and called heresy. He said to the elders of Ephesus, "Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you." "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Peter and the rest of the apostles never shrunk from avowing their religious sentiments, though they knew that both Jews and Gentiles viewed them as teaching most false,

absurd and pernicious doctrines. And all faithful ministers, who imbibe their spirit and embrace their doctrines, are not afraid to avow their religious sentiments, though they know the world will reproach them for it. This leads me to show,

II. Why those, who preach the great and essential doctrines of the gospel are not afraid to avow their religious sentiments, which are so generally stigmatized with every opprobrious epithet.

1. One reason is, because they know they are true.

Paul knew, that his religious sentiments were true, because they were founded on the infallible word of God; and this knowledge gave him confidence to avow his sentiments before Felix, the governor, and the grand council of the Jewish Sanhedrim. "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers; believing all things, which are written in the law and the prophets." The law and the prophets contained the whole of the Old Testament, which was the whole Bible that God had then put into the hands of the Jews; and which they, as well as Paul, acknowledged to be of divine inspiration. He told them, that he built his religious sentiments upon the Bible; and therefore knew them to be true: and he was willing to avow them before the world. He said to the Galatians, "I marvel, that ye are so soon removed from him, that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ." "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel, that was preached of me, was not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." He says to the Corinthians, "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." The apostle knew that he had derived his religious sentiments from the Old and New Testaments; and therefore he was not afraid to avow them, and to preach any and every doctrine of the gospel, however displeasing to the human heart. Though the heart might hate them, yet he knew that the understanding and conscience would approve them. On this ground he confidently said, "We also believe; and therefore

speak." He was not afraid to speak what he believed and knew was divine truth. The apostle Peter also was not afraid to avow his religious sentiments, because he knew they were true. He says, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty." The great and essential doctrines of the gospel may be as certainly known by ministers at this day, as they were by the apostles; and those who do certainly know them, are not afraid to profess and preach them, plainly and fully, though the offence of the cross has not ceased. Those who know that the doctrines of the gospel are divinely true, know that they are no heresy; and therefore are not afraid to avow and preach them without the least hesitancy, or reserve, in their full latitude and extent.

2. Those who preach the pure doctrines of the gospel, are not afraid to avow their religious sentiments, because they feel satisfied that they may be completely maintained, against all who dispute or deny them. Truth can be maintained and defended, but error cannot. Those who know that their religious sentiments are founded on the word of God, know that they can be maintained and defended against all the learning, sophistry and subtilty of those, who dispute or deny them. Plain and infallible arguments may always be drawn from the Bible, in support of the doctrines contained in it and in refutation of every false scheme of religion. Christ forewarned those who embraced and preached the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, that they should be brought before kings and rulers, for his name's sake. But he told them for their consolation, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, or resist." By faith in this promise and by confidence in the truths of the gospel they preached, the apostles were not afraid to meet the most ingenious and learned opposers of their doctrines, whether among Jews or Gentiles. "When there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines and Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen, they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." And while Paul waited for Silas and Timotheus at Athens, the most renowned city in the Roman empire for learning and eloquence, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. "Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews and with the devout persons and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him. And some said, what will this

babbler say? Other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?" Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill and demonstrated the being and perfections of God, and the duty men owe to him, so clearly that he converted Dionysius and a number of others. Paul also disputed against the Grecians, against Elymas the sorcerer, and against all who opposed his doctrines in the school of Tyrannus. He always knew that he preached the truth, and was always confident that he could support the truth, against all the prejudices of the Jews, and all the learning, philosophy, and eloquence of the heathen priests and sages. He was, therefore, always ready to confess that he was a christian, and preached the true doctrines of Christ. And those ministers who at this day understand and believe the true doctrines of the gospel, and possess the spirit of it, feel satisfied, as Paul did, that they are able to meet and refute all gainsayers and opposers; and of course they are not afraid to avow their religious sentiments fully and frankly.

3. Those who preach the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel are not afraid to avow their religious sentiments, because they view them as infinitely important. They view the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, as absolutely necessary to be known, in order to embrace the gospel and to understand and practice the duties of it, so as to secure the salvation of the soul. The duties of the gospel cannot be rightly understood and practiced, without understanding the first principles of the gospel, upon which all its duties are founded. The apostles primarily and principally taught the great and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, as the means of converting sinners and bringing them to exercise all the Christian graces and virtues. Their most common mode of preaching was much more sentimental, or doctrinal, than what is commonly called practical. The apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, that it was his general practice to preach sentimentally. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." And he says it was by this mode of preaching he became successful in converting sinners among Jews and Gentiles. "For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called,

both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." "Now thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish; to the one we are a savor of death unto death, and to the other, the savor of life unto life." "For we are not as many, who corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." The same great doctrines of the gospel, which the apostles preached with most success, have been preached with most success by faithful ministers ever since. And it appears, by universal observation, that those who seldom preach sentimentally, and generally preach practically, are rarely very successful. It is by preaching the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which are most offensive to the natural heart, that the most powerful and saving effects are produced. Those, therefore, who feel the vast importance of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, are not afraid to profess and preach them fully and plainly, though the world may call them error, delusion, or heresy. They believe that no other doctrines can be preached, which will make men wise unto salvation. They are willing to have it known that they believe no other doctrines, and mean to preach no others.

4. Those who believe and love the gospel, are not afraid openly to profess and plainly to preach their religious sentiments; because it belongs to their official character to watch and guard their people against all false and dangerous errors and delusions. God said to the prophet Ezekiel, "O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." And to Titus he said, "A bishop must hold fast the faithful word, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things that they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." He likewise expressly said to the Ephesians, that "Christ gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for

the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." All true ministers of the gospel feel themselves thus divinely authorized and required to avow their religious sentiments, and preach them plainly; that by sound doctrine they may exhort, convince and stop the mouths of all gainsayers. They are, by office, spiritual watchmen; and it is their proper business to watch and guard their people against all their spiritual enemies. They ought to stand in the front, in fighting the good fight of faith. It belongs to them to detect, to refute, and to condemn those who lie in wait to deceive and destroy. If they unfurl their colors, and make it appear to their enemies that, as they are set for the defence of the gospel, so they mean to defend it, they will be more apt to retreat than to attack them. Does not universal observation show that all sectarians are more disposed to attack those ministers who conceal their religious sentiments, than those who openly avow them and plainly preach them? For this, and the other reasons that have been mentioned, the true ministers of Christ have no ground to fear avowing their religious sentiments, and preaching them plainly. Though some of their people should fear to stand with them, and should forsake them, yet they may have ground to expect the Lord will stand with them and strengthen them against all opposition, that the gospel may have free course and run and be glorified.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the true ministers of the gospel preach their sentiments openly and boldly, then it is natural to suppose that false teachers will use every artifice to conceal their sentiments. Accordingly, we find that the inspired writers represent them as seducers, deceivers, evil workers, who lie in wait to deceive, and employ every artifice to captivate the hearts rather than to enlighten the understandings, and convince the consciences of their hearers. The apostle Paul abundantly exhorts christians to view false teachers as such odious characters; and to guard themselves against all their arts of deception. In his epistle to the Romans, he says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them, who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they, that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly;

and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple." He says to Timothy, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their ownselves — having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." "The time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts, shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; for they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." And he says to the Hebrews, "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines." Peter says to christians in general, "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them; and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." The apostle John says, "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." All false teachers imbibe the spirit of the first and great deceiver, and never fail to discover a peculiar skill in the arts of deception. They learn to conceal their sentiments, by good words, fair speeches and ambiguous expressions. They learn how to improve the most favorable seasons of pouring their false instructions into the minds of the ignorant, unlearned and unsuspecting, by familiar conversation and more public discourses. They act upon the principle, that the end sanctifies the means; so that they allow themselves to employ any means of deception and seduction, which they think will be the most successful. This is exactly the representation of false teachers which is given in the texts I have cited. And this representation is fully confirmed by stubborn and well known facts. Dr. Chauncey concealed his false doctrine of universal salvation from every body, but his intimate friends, for more than forty years; and he never published it in America, but only in England, just before he left the world. Dr. Huntington concealed his scheme of universal salvation a long time, and never suffered it to be published till after his death. When Mr. Murray, the Universalist, first came to America, he preached occasionally in some of the largest and best congregations in New England, before he avowed his corrupt sentiments.

There have been Unitarians, in this State, of various forms, degrees, or shades of difference, above fifty years; but they generally concealed their sentiments, till very lately they have been reluctantly compelled to avow them. The Methodists are notorious for concealing their sentiments and using the arts of deception to corrupt and proselyte. The Baptists, though generally more correct in their doctrinal opinions, are too prone to use good words and fair speeches to bring others over to their peculiar way of thinking on the subject of baptism. Though sectarians may boast of the success they gain by their arts of concealment and deception, yet they have no right to boast of their integrity. Those, and those only, who avow their religious sentiments, as the primitive preachers of the gospel did, have the claim of integrity which none can justly deny them. Transparency is a beautiful trait in any human character. False teachers themselves would appear to much better advantage, if they would renounce all their arts of deception, and unfair, not to say unchristian modes of dividing and corrupting religious societies.

2. We learn from what has been said, why the true doctrines of the gospel have been so generally called heresy. We have seen, that they were called so in the days of the apostles by Jews and Gentiles; and they are now generally called so, over the heathen and Christian world. But they cannot be called so, by any of mankind because they know them to be false, or can prove them to be false, or can feel them to be false and contrary to the dictates of their own conscience. They have been known to be true, and proved to be true, and felt to be true, by all godly men in the world, nearly six thousand years. Why then have the great majority of mankind called them error, delusion and heresy? There is but one reason; and that is obvious. It is because they have hated light and loved darkness, or hated truth and loved error. To this cause our Saviour ascribed it. He said to his hearers, that men loved darkness rather than light, and that they believed him not because he told them the truth. All natural men, who are men of the world, love any religious error better than any religious truth. They love false teachers, who give a false character of God, a false character of Christ, and a false character of themselves, better than those teachers who exhibit the true character of God, the true character of Christ, and a true character of their own hearts. Accordingly, the apostle John, after describing false teachers, says, "They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." All, who believe and love and teach false doctrines, are self condemned; their reason and conscience condemn the errors they embrace

and love. They are really heretics; and an heretic, the apostle says, is one who knowing himself to be such, is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself. God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions. They have racked their minds to discover a vast many different schemes of religion, which are more agreeable to their selfish hearts than the gospel scheme of salvation. But all their false schemes of religion are repugnant to their reason and conscience; and are so many plain and conclusive arguments to prove the total corruption of their hearts. This, however, they are not willing to allow, or to feel; and therefore they call darkness light, and light darkness. They put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. They call truth heresy, and real heresy truth. All the religious errors and delusions in the world are a foil to display the beauty, the excellence and the importance of the gospel. And the time is fast approaching, when all false schemes of religion shall cease, and the glorious gospel of God shall fill the world with light and love; and wisdom shall be justified of her children.

3. We learn from what has been said, why those who are afraid to avow their religious sentiments and take pains to conceal them, are so ready to unite with one another. Among the various denominations of christians, there are not a few who are afraid to avow their religious sentiments and wish to conceal them; and all these are very much disposed to unite together, though they are ignorant how much they differ from each other in opinion. There has been a great deal said and something done lately, in respect to forming a great and general union among those who are known to entertain different opinions concerning the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. Many are willing to say that this is proper, and would have a happy tendency to promote the great cause of true religion. But are there not other reasons, which imperceptibly warp their judgment? Do they not doubt of the truth of their own religious sentiments? Do they not wish to be countenanced and supported in concealing their doubtful sentiments? Do they not desire to form a strong combination against those who are so presumptuous as to avow and preach the peculiar doctrines of the gospel; by which they implicitly condemn their wavering opinions. But if this union could be formed, would it not be an union in error, in opposition to truth? Would it not tend to strengthen and increase all the religious errors which now exist, and prepare the way for the spread of infidelity and skepticism? Would it not be a violation of all the precepts of the gospel which require christians to be united in truth? The apostle recommends such an union, and no other. "Now, I

beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." But how can those, who mutually conceal their religious sentiments from each other, be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment? Those and those only can be perfectly united in their religious sentiments, who are not afraid to avow, and wish not to conceal their opinions concerning the peculiar doctrines of the gospel; but they cannot consistently and honestly profess to be united with any others.

4. It appears from what has been said, that it highly concerns ministers, at this day especially, to preach the gospel with confidence, plainness and fidelity. It is almost every where spoken against by false teachers, sectarians, nominal christians and the men of the world. There appears a much greater zeal among all sects and denominations to spread errors and delusions, than to promote truth and vital piety. There never was, in this country, so much party zeal before, as abounds at the present day. No methods are left unemployed to gain proselytes to gross and dangerous errors, and to bear down all who boldly and plainly preach the pure doctrines of the gospel. As ministers are set for the defence of the gospel, it behooves them to preach the truth and the whole truth, without fear or favor; and expose and refute deceivers, seducers and vain talkers, who are attacking every essential doctrine of the gospel. It was by preaching the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, that the apostles exposed, refuted and silenced all gainsayers and opposers among Jews and Gentiles. Hence Paul says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." It becomes ministers to set their faces as a flint against all corrupters and opposers of the truth, whether high or low, learned or unlearned, open or concealed. God said to Jeremiah, "Gird up thy loins and arise and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city and an iron pillar and brazen walls, against the whole land; against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." This is a warrant and encouragement to ministers to preach divine truths plainly and oppose fatal errors boldly.

Ministers must be reponsible for all the dangerous errors which spring up among their people, or which are either privately or publicly propagated among them, unless they employ all proper means in their power, to detect, refute and condemn them. The prophet said, he stood in his watchtower in the day time, and sat in his ward whole nights, to espy danger. This is an example which every spiritual watchman ought to imitate. Ministers are undoubtedly responsible for the flood of errors, which threaten to overwhelm the land, by neglecting to discover them seasonably and to oppose them boldly. They have been too much afraid of avowing and preaching the great doctrines of the gospel plainly and fully. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." But it is now more important, though more difficult, to preach the gospel plainly, and by sound doctrine to refute and silence gainsayers. Hence,

5. Ministers have great need of the prayers of their people, that they may preach the gospel with confidence and plainness. They are in great danger of neglecting this duty, from their brethren who conceal their sentiments, and from individuals, among their churches and congregations, who love error better than truth, and take pains to propagate it by unwarrantable means. It is hard and extremely difficult for ministers to stand alone, without the aid and prayers of those who profess to love and hear the truth. Even the apostles felt their need of the assistance and prayers of their Christian brethren; and affectionately called upon them to pray for them, that they might be enabled to deliver divine truths with freedom and plainness. The apostle Paul desired the christians at Ephesus, that they would pray for him that utterance might be given him, that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel. He made a similar request to the Colossians; and to the Thessalonians he says, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified;—and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith." All ministers now need and all faithful ministers now desire the prayers, assistance and countenance of the people of God, that they may have courage, fortitude and zeal, to preach the gospel plainly and boldly as they ought to preach it, in the face of a frowning world, who unreasonably hate it and oppose it.

This reminds us, my hearers, of the mutual duties which we owe to one another.

It is forty-nine years to day, since I took the pastoral care of the Church and people in this place. When I came here I found a respectable and exemplary Church, and a very regular people. And God has been pleased at different times to appear

and plead his own cause. But on the whole, has not the cause of truth, of piety and of virtue declined? Were there, forty-nine years ago, many prayerless families in this place? or many Sabbath breakers? or many profane swearers? or any infidels, or any Unitarians, or any Universalists? Why then are such persons to be found here now? This the preacher ought to ask himself. Has he not stood in his watch-tower? Or has he not descried any danger? or has he feared and neglected to give seasonable warning of the dangers he has descried? Has he appeared to use any means to conceal his sentiments, or to keep back, through fear or favor, any truths, any warnings, or admonitions? Or has he, on the other hand, preached plainly and intelligibly on the great doctrines of the gospel; and fairly met and attempted to refute every gross and fatal error and corrupting practice? If these things be so, why have gross and dangerous errors and corrupt practices existed so much, of late years? There must have been some criminal causes of these deplorable effects. They must be chiefly ascribed to the preacher, or to those who have attended, or neglected to attend, his preaching. It belongs to you to judge of me, and to me to judge of you, with candor and impartiality. To this duty I have called myself, and have called you, once every year. And to this duty I now call you and myself. It is high time for you and for me, to look forward to a day which cannot be far from me, and may not be far from some of you; and prepare to meet and give an account, how and what we have spoken, and how and what we have heard.

SERMON XXIII.

GOD REWARDS HIS FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS.

FUNERAL OF REV. ELISHA FISH, A. M., WHO DIED AUGUST 6, 1795, IN THE 76TH YEAR OF HIS AGE, AND 44TH OF HIS MINISTRY.

BECAUSE that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. — JOSHUA, xiv. 14

THESE words refer to Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who was a principal man in one of the principal tribes of Israel. He came out of Egypt with Moses, and went into Canaan with Joshua. He was now fourscore and five years old, and just ready to pass from his earthly to his heavenly inheritance. But while Joshua was dividing the land, he came and claimed a particular city, which God had promised to give him as a reward of his singular virtue. Accordingly we are told that when he presented his claim, "Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day; because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel."

In considering these words, on this occasion, it may be proper to show,

I. What is implied in Caleb's following the Lord wholly. And,

II. To inquire why the Lord rewarded him for it.

I. I am to show what is implied in Caleb's following the Lord wholly.

Though this may imply a great deal, yet it cannot imply absolute perfection. "For there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not." None of our fallen race

ever arrive to sinless perfection this side of heaven. There, indeed, all true saints will cease from sin, and become perfect in holiness. But while they remain in this world, it is the constitution of God that they should feel and bewail the remains of moral corruption. It cannot be supposed, therefore, that the inspired historian meant to give Caleb an immaculate character, or to represent him as absolutely perfect, by saying, that "he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." This being premised, I proceed to observe,

1. That Caleb's following the Lord wholly, implies that his heart was renewed.

So long as men remain in a state of nature, they are alienated from God, and averse to his service. They say unto him, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." But when any are renewed in the temper of their minds, they immediately become reconciled to God, and delight to follow him. When two are agreed, they love to walk together. Caleb's wholly following the Lord, therefore, implies that he was a partaker of the divine nature, and possessed a pure, benevolent spirit; which is peculiar to those who are born again. And, indeed, God says as much as this concerning him. "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went." Caleb's spirit was totally different from that of the murmuring multitude. He had a filial, dutiful, submissive spirit, which the scripture calls a perfect heart. Thus it is said, "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days." Hezekiah says the same of his own heart. "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart." And when David was providing materials for the temple, he rejoiced greatly, "because the people offered willingly to the Lord with a perfect heart." A good heart is moral perfection itself, and properly denominates the subject of it a perfect man. In this sense it is said, "Noah was perfect in his generation." In this sense it is said, "Job was a perfect and upright man." And in this sense it is said, Caleb "wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." He possessed a heart which followed hard after God, and which desired perfect conformity to the divine image.

2. Caleb's following the Lord wholly, implies that he paid an external respect to all the intimations of his will.

His obedience was universal. He considered every divine precept as clothed with divine authority, and felt an habitual disposition to obey all the laws of God. Like Job, he feared God and eschewed evil. And like Zacharias and Elizabeth, he walked in all the commandments and ordinances of

the Lord blameless. If he had allowed himself in one sin, or habitually offended in one point, he would have been guilty of all. It is essential to the character of a good man, to follow the Lord in all his precepts and appointments. "This is the love of God," says the apostle John, "that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." Caleb expressed his love to God by holding all his commandments sacred, and by paying an external respect to them all, in the whole course of his life. Though Moses and Aaron, and many other good men, fell short of universal obedience, yet there is not a single blot or blemish mentioned in the life of Caleb. In all his external conduct, "he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." Besides,

3. This amiable character implies that he persevered in obedience, under every trial and temptation.

If he had been weary in well doing, or fainted in the day of adversity, or deserted the cause of God in the hour of danger, he would not have followed the Lord wholly. But instead of fainting and backsliding, as many others did, he followed the Lord with constancy and perseverance, through a long course of years, and a long scene of trials. He was probably a good man before he left the land of Egypt, and consequently his perseverance continued more than forty years. This was a long course of trial, which the people in general were unable to endure. But while they ceased, he continued to follow the Lord. For when they murmured, he rejoiced; when they rebelled, he obeyed; when they distrusted God, he trusted in him; when they despised the pleasant land, he highly esteemed it; and when they were for turning back to Egypt, he was for pressing forward to Canaan. In this last instance, his persevering spirit was put to the severest trial. He was one of the twelve whom Moses appointed to search the land of Canaan, and to discover the number, the strength and situation of its inhabitants. At his return, all his colleagues, except Joshua, gave a false and discouraging report, which spread consternation through the whole congregation, and filled their mouths with bitter complaints against God, against Moses, against Joshua, and against himself. In this perilous situation he rose up and, with a firm and undaunted mind, contradicted the false report of the spies, displayed the fertility and fulness of the promised land, reproved the unreasonable murmurs of the people, and exhorted them to pursue their journey with faith and confidence in the promise and protection of Heaven. This solemn and animated address, however, only excited their resentment, and made them cry out, "Stone him with stones." But instead of being awed by that fear of man which bringeth

a snare, he set his face as a flint, and resolved to follow the Lord wholly; though more than thirty years remained to traverse the wilderness, with a gainsaying and disobedient multitude.

Such was the character of Caleb. He followed the Lord heartily, universally, and perseveringly. And such a sincere, uniform, and constant course of obedience, for forty or fifty years, fully verified the divine declaration, that "he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." But this is not all. God not only approved, but rewarded his obedience. And this leads us to inquire,

II. Why the Lord rewarded him for following him wholly. For this he was promised a reward, and for this a reward was actually bestowed. But why? I answer,

1. Because his wholly following the Lord, was a strong expression of his supreme love to him.

Obedience is the natural expression of love. "Ye are my friends," says Christ, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." A servant expresses his love to his master, by obedience. A child expresses his love to his parent, by obedience. And a creature expresses his love to his Creator, by obedience. Abraham loved God, and he expressed his love to him, by obeying him, under the most trying circumstances. God required him to leave his country and his friends; and he left them without a murmur or objection. God required him to go to a place which he knew not, and there offer up his son as a burnt offering; and he immediately and cordially submitted to his sovereign will. These acts of obedience were strong expressions of love, and justly procured him the character of the friend of God. Moses displayed his love to his Maker, by forsaking the pleasures of Egypt, the prospects of a crown, and suffering affliction with the people of God. And thus Caleb expressed his supreme affection to the Lord, by following him wholly.

His trials and conflicts were great, during the whole course of his journey to Canaan. Next to Moses and Aaron and Joshua, he had the most difficult part to perform. The whole body of the people, indeed, passed through dark and dreary scenes, in which Caleb was equally involved. But beside these trials, he had the folly, and caprice, and opposition of the people themselves to surmount. They not only murmured and rebelled against God, but insisted that he should join with them in their murmurs and rebellion, and threatened to stone him if he refused. But he despised their threats, and resolved for himself to serve the Lord wholly; and what is still more singular and surprising, he kept his resolution. Many others, no doubt, who accompanied him into the wilderness, made the

same resolution; but found themselves unequal to the burdens of the way, and finally fainted in their course. But he rose superior to every obstacle. Neither the hosts of Pharaoh, nor the absence of Moses, nor the defection of Aaron, nor the giants of Canaan, could cool his zeal or warp his resolution. He determined to endure unto the end; and unto the end he endured. He loved God sincerely and supremely, and he meant to express his love to him, by uniform obedience, under the most trying circumstances. This God saw, approved, and rewarded, agreeably to his own declaration, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."

2. Caleb greatly promoted the glory of God and the good of his people, by his uniform and persevering obedience.

This rendered him one of the principal instruments in the hand of God, of conducting his people to Canaan, and of executing his wise and gracious purposes respecting them. God loved his people, and those that sought their good. Caleb devoted himself to their interests, and cheerfully sacrificed his ease, his reputation, and his happiness, to promote their prosperity. He was willing both to labor and to suffer, that he might put an end to their labors and sufferings, and bring them to their promised rest. He seems to have been the fourth man in the kingdom, when they left Egypt; and after the death of Aaron and Moses, he became the second. He then stood next to Joshua, who led the chosen tribes into the land of promise. He uniformly appeared on the Lord's side; and espoused his cause, whenever it was opposed, or deserted. By walking with God, and observing his wise and holy providence, he became a man of great experimental and practical knowledge, which enabled him to be very useful in guiding and instructing an ignorant and refractory people. It is natural to suppose, that he had a principal hand in forming the lives and manners of that generation, which was educated in the wilderness, and eventually prepared for the promised inheritance. His singular and excellent example, in wholly following the Lord, would naturally affect their young and tender minds, and give all his instructions and exertions for their good, a peculiar force. His constant and universal obedience, therefore, was no less useful than amiable. And his great and extensive usefulness was a good reason why the Lord God of Israel should reward his signal services, agreeably to his own maxim, "Them that honor me, I will honor." I may observe, once more,

3. There was something very distinguishing in Caleb's conduct.

He set out from Egypt with a vast multitude of people, whose minds had been deeply impressed with a sense of their obliga-

tions to God. They had groaned under the heavy hand of oppression. They had seen the judgments which had been inflicted upon Pharaoh. They had experienced a signal deliverance at the Red Sea. They had seen the appearance and heard the voice of Jehovah on Mount Sinai. These scenes sensibly affected their hearts, and constrained them to resolve, that all the Lord had said unto them they would do, and be obedient. At this time, the whole body of the people seriously intended to follow the Lord wholly, by obeying his commands and submitting to his providence, until they reached the land to which they were journeying. But notwithstanding all these promising appearances, only a small number of the adults fulfilled their resolutions, and endured unto the end. The first time the people were numbered, they amounted to more than six hundred thousand, from twenty years old and upward. But among all this numerous host none persevered, but Caleb and Joshua. All the rest finally lost their resolution, their religion, and their souls. This we have reason to believe, from the account given us in the twenty-sixth of Numbers. "These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab, by Jordan near Jericho. But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai; for the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." *

When Caleb left Egypt, he had reason to expect, from the appearance and profession of the people, that they would have followed the Lord, and kept him company through all the troubles and dangers of the wilderness. But though they soon began to forsake him, one after another, and all finally forsook him, except Joshua; yet he distinguished himself from that untoward generation, and steadfastly followed the Lord God of Israel, to the end of his journey. Then he appeared a rare and astonishing character to all around him. Joshua and others might well say, when they saw him walking the streets of Ca-

* That those who perished in the wilderness by virtue of the divine threatening lost their souls, is very evident from the following considerations.

1. They are represented as living in a course of external disobedience. Numbers, xiv. 22, 23.

2. Their hearts as well as lives are represented as extremely corrupt. Deuteronomy, xxix. 2, 3, 4. Psalm lxxxi. 10, 11, 12, and xcv. 7 — 11.

3. They are represented as unbelievers. Hebrews, iii. 17, 18, 19, and iv. 2, 6, 11.

4. They are set up as monuments of God's wrath, and as a warning to all unbelievers. 1 Corinthians, x. 1—10. Hebrews, iii. 12—19, and iv. 1—11.

These are very striking marks of their reprobation.

naan, There is that amiable and venerable man, who distinguished himself from his numerous contemporaries, and wholly followed the Lord God of Israel, while they shamefully and criminally forsook him. This singularity of his obedience not only displayed, but really enhanced, the worth of his virtue and piety, and laid a proper foundation for God to reward him with peculiar marks of his favor.

The character and reward of Caleb, naturally suggest several serious and useful reflections.

1. What great encouragement have all true saints, to persevere in the ways of well doing. Though they may meet with peculiar trials and difficulties in their religious course; yet they may rest assured, that all the obstacles which the world can throw in their way, are surmountable. They have been surmounted by those faithful servants of God, who have gone before them, and reached the heavenly Canaan. Very few ever travelled a more rough and dangerous path than Caleb. He met with almost every thing, which had a tendency to cool his love, weaken his resolution, and destroy his faith. How often was he involved in scenes which put on a discouraging, and even a dismaying aspect. How must he have felt, when he stood with a desponding multitude, at the side of the Red Sea. How must he have felt, when he heard the whole congregation murmuring at the stay of Moses on the mount. How must he have felt, when he saw Aaron carried away by the stream of corruption, and personally concerned in aiding the people in the grossest idolatry. How must he have felt, when he saw plague after plague sweeping away a faithless and incorrigible generation. And who can conceive his painful feelings, when the whole congregation rose in rebellion against God, refused to pursue their journey to the land of promise, and were irreversibly doomed to fall in the wilderness? But instead of fainting and despairing, he surmounted all these obstacles, and steadily pursued the path of duty. And as he never forsook God, so God never forsook him; but carried him safely and triumphantly through his dangerous journey to the land of promise. This may animate all true saints, to run with patience and constancy the race which is set before them. Bad as the world is, they may overcome it, and follow the Lord wholly. Neither the defection of their professed friends, nor the opposition of their open enemies, nor all the devices and assaults of Satan, can obstruct their course, so long as they trust in the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength.

2. What great benefit may those, who follow the Lord wholly, derive from the evils and burdens of their wearisome pilgrimage! Caleb acquired a beautiful character, and a distinguished

reward, by properly improving a series of great and complicated trials. He learned obedience by the things which he suffered. His love, his faith, his patience, and all his gracious affections, were purified in the furnace of affliction. "Affliction is the good man's shining time." Abraham shone in affliction. Job shone in affliction. Daniel shone in affliction. Paul, the apostles, and primitive christians shone in affliction. Though saints may shudder at the prospect of future afflictions, yet they may rejoice in the opportunity, that all their future trials may afford them, of increasing their holiness in this world, and their happiness in the next. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

3. How will saints hereafter admire the distinguishing grace of God, by which they were conducted to heaven. When Caleb arrived at Canaan, he found himself a spared monument of God's sparing mercy. And while he reviewed the scenes through which he had passed, and the divine preference and protection which he had experienced, through the course of his journey, he was doubtless ready to say, "Here am I; but where are the hundreds and thousands who set out with me for this happy place? Why was I preserved, while thousands fell at my side, and ten thousands at my right hand? Why did not my love, my faith, my hope, my resolution fail as well as theirs? By the grace of God, I am what I am, and where I am!" A similar, though a more affecting scene, will open to the view of saints, when they arrive in heaven. How many will they miss, whom they expected to find in the seats of bliss! And how will they be struck with God's distinguishing grace towards themselves, when they look around and perceive that this, and that, and the other professed follower of Christ has forsaken him, and fallen and perished in the way!

4. Does God speak respectfully of those who follow him wholly, and graciously reward their faithful labors? Then we may justly conclude, that we ought to honor those whom he delights to honor. When Caleb appeared before Joshua, to receive the reward of his singular services, Joshua, we are told, blessed him; that is, paid him the respect which was due to a man, who had acted a worthy and useful part upon the stage of life. This example we mention, not as an apology, but as a warrant, for applying the excellent character which has just been described, to the Reverend Mr. Fish; that aged, venerable, useful servant of God, who has exchanged this sacred desk for that sable coffin.

Descended from a religious family, and favored with a religious education, his attention was early awakened to the serious concerns of religion. And the better to prepare him for his own service, God was pleased to give him, for a long time, most clear and distressing views of the enmity, malignity, and total corruption of the human heart. But at length, his darkness and distress abated, and he enjoyed a comfortable hope that he was reconciled to God, and entitled to his special favor. And from that time forward, he determined wholly to follow the Lord. It was his inquiry, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the answer to this inquiry, from time to time through the course of his life, determined his conduct.

Having learned, from his own experience, the guilty and perishing state of sinners, and having tasted and seen that the Lord was gracious, he felt a strong desire to preach the gospel, and become an instrument of turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. He preferred the work of the ministry before any other employment in life. And being persuaded that it was his duty to prepare himself to preach the gospel, he surmounted peculiar difficulties, and obtained a liberal education. But while he was pursuing his studies, and furnishing his mind with useful knowledge, he suffered none of the vanities and allurements of the world to turn him aside from following the Lord. He made religion his main business, and the glory of God his ultimate object, amidst all his literary pursuits. And as soon as he had finished his academical course, he immediately offered himself as a candidate for the work, to which his heart had been long and zealously attached. And here again, he kept his resolution to follow the Lord, and to be guided by the voice of his providence. For, though he was not unconscious of his own abilities, nor without promising prospects of settlement; yet being called to take the pastoral care of this people, in their weak and infant state, he cheerfully consented to serve them in the work of the gospel. And having put his hand to the plow, he never looked back; but with all his heart and strength followed the Lord, and promoted the great interests of his kingdom. Here his fidelity to God, and to his people, displayed itself in various respects.

Being understandingly and heartily attached to the peculiar doctrines of grace, he made these the common subjects of his public discourses. Though he knew the strong opposition of the human heart to divine truth, yet he meant, in the course of his preaching, to please God rather than men. He made a point of explaining the gospel, and of giving his hearers a clear, connected, extensive view of the great scheme of redemp-

tion. He shunned not to declare all the counsel of God, and kept nothing back, which he supposed would be profitable to his people.

As he loved the gospel and the souls of men, so he preached with uncommon fervor and zeal; which never failed to convince his hearers, that he earnestly sought their highest good. He loved to preach, and took every proper opportunity of spreading the knowledge of Christ. He was in labors more abundantly than most of the ministers of the gospel. He preached Christ in season and out of season, and from house to house. He was indefatigable in dispensing divine truth to all who had an ear to hear, both among his own people, and among those who were destitute of stated teachers.

He took uncommon pains to instruct his people in private as well as in public. He annually visited every family in his whole congregation, in order to know the state of his flock, and to administer such instructions and admonitions as the state and circumstances of each individual required. He was truly apt to teach, and possessed the rare talents of a good casuist. His experience and observation enabled him to give peculiar light to saints in darkness, and to sinners in distress. And in all such cases, he discovered his faithfulness, in endeavoring to guard every person against every thing which he considered either as an error, or as a delusion.

At the head of his family, he appeared in a respectable light. He visibly walked within his house with a perfect heart. There he taught religion, both by precept and by example. He commanded his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord, and restrained them from every evil and false way. His house appeared like a bethel; especially on the Sabbath, for which he maintained and inculcated a most sacred reverence.

But the most shining part of his character still remains to be mentioned: I mean his exemplary conduct in private life. He carried his religion into all places, and into all companies. Though he wore not a sad countenance, yet sobriety and gravity marked his whole deportment. No evil communication proceeded out of his mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying. His veracity and integrity were never, perhaps, so much as called in question. He practically said, at all times, and before all men, that he meant to follow the Lord wholly.

It is natural to suppose, that such a pious and exemplary man, possessed of a strong and penetrating mind, must have been extensively useful. And so he was. He greatly promoted the temporal and spiritual interests of his own people. His ministerial labors among them have been crowned, from time to time, with singular success. His occasional publications

have served the cause of liberty and of religion. And his vigorous exertions in ecclesiastical councils, have done essential benefit to the churches of Christ, for which he will be had in long and grateful remembrance.

As he lived, so he died. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." A few weeks ago he said, that his mind was calm and serene. And speaking of his near prospect of death, he observed, that though there were some circumstances of leaving the world which made him feel the passions of a man, yet he enjoyed the comforts of a christian.

Now, if the Lord will approve and reward those who follow him wholly, then we have reason to believe, that the late pastor of this flock has made a happy transition from this world to the world of light, and there received the divine reward of his faithful labors. But though his removal from the scenes and sufferings of mortality be gain to him; yet it is a heavy loss to those whom he has left behind. The death of a pious man, and especially the death of a pious and useful minister, is a loss to the public, and gives them occasion to cry, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

But we, who have lost a father in the ministry, are more nearly and deeply interested in this instance of mortality. The Lord of the harvest has called out of his vineyard one of his faithful and laborious servants, by which he has loudly admonished us, that we shall not continue, by reason of death. The day draws nigh, when we must be called from our labors, whether we have finished the work which God has given us to do, or not. It concerns us, therefore, to work while the day lasts, and to watch for souls, as those who must give account. Let us be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, that our labor may not be in vain in the Lord.

My heart has anticipated the pain of addressing her, who has lost the companion of her youth, and the guide and support of her declining years. Permit me, Madam, to suggest a few thoughts to your wounded, tender, feeling mind. It is true, indeed, you have cause to mourn; but not to mourn as those who have no hope. You have lost your nearest and dearest friend on earth; but the Lord, whom you and he so long followed, may soon indulge you with a happy meeting in the kingdom of glory, where all tears shall be wiped from your eyes. And the prospect of this future joyful meeting may well reconcile you to the present painful parting. How would he have conducted, whom you now lament, had it been your lot to have first reached the heavenly Canaan, and his to have

remained behind in this vale of tears? Would he not have holden his peace, like Aaron; and, like David, suppressed every murmuring thought, because the Lord had done it? Let his example of patience and suffering affliction, have its proper influence upon your views and feelings, in this hour of trial. Your bereaved and mournful situation is a new and pressing motive to follow the Lord wholly. He can give you strength in weakness, light in darkness, and joy in sorrow. And if this light affliction, which is but for a moment, leads you to lean upon his arm, and to confide in his faithfulness, it will happily prepare you to come to your own grave, as a shock of corn fully ripe in its season.

The bereaved children will please to remember that they have enjoyed no common privilege, in being the offspring of such a pious, faithful, exemplary parent. How many prayers has he put up to God for you; how many kind and faithful instructions and warnings has he given you; how long have you enjoyed his endearing company, his faithful preaching, and his moving example. You have great reason to sing of mercy, as well as of judgment. And so long as you remember your loss, your loss will remind you of the peculiar obligations which lie upon you, to follow the Lord wholly. Your pious father undoubtedly left you, with a humble hope of meeting some or all of you in the heavenly Canaan.* And can you bear the thought of his never seeing you, and of your never seeing him, in the mansions of glory? Let his life and his death unitedly constrain you to live as he lived, that you may die as he died.

This whole congregation, we doubt not, sincerely lament the death of their amiable and faithful pastor. He loved you with a paternal affection, being willing to spend and to be spent for you. And he rejoiced in the marks of your love and respect to him. You have been a people highly favored of the Lord. He has given you, for a long season, one of his richest blessings. One of his able and faithful ministers has employed his talents, exhausted his strength, and worn out a long life, in the service of your souls. Be entreated to remember how you have received and heard; and to repent, if you have been barren and unfruitful, in such a well watered and cultivated vineyard. Your pastor has given up his account, and you must soon give up yours. Though you are now separated, yet you must soon meet again, before the supreme tribunal. And if any of you are now unprepared for that solemn meeting, it highly concerns you to prepare immediately. Know ye not, that the

* Mr. Fish left six children. Five of them are professors of religion, and two of them worthy ministers of the gospel.

saints shall judge the world? Know ye not, that faithful ministers will be a savor of death unto death unto their impenitent hearers? Let this thought sink deeply into all your hearts; and especially into the hearts of those who have professed to be fellow travellers with their aged pastor to the heavenly Canaan. Multitudes have apparently set their faces Zion-ward, and yet have fainted and perished in the way. Labor, therefore, to reach the heavenly rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

To conclude: Let this whole assembly be urged to prepare for dying. You have been preparing for living. You have felt the absurdity of sleeping in harvest, and of neglecting, in summer, to prepare for winter. But it is infinitely more absurd and dangerous, to neglect, in time, to prepare for eternity. We beseech you, therefore, to receive the salutary counsel of our compassionate Redeemer: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

INFLUENCE OF A HOLY HEART ON A CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

FUNERAL OF REV. DAVID SANFORD, A. M., MEDWAY, WHO DIED APRIL 7, 1810, AGED 73.

For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith ; and much people was added unto the Lord. — Acts, xi. 24.

After our Saviour had risen from the dead, he directed his apostles to preach the gospel first at Jerusalem; where his enemies had imbrued their hands in his blood, and where they were prepared to make the greatest opposition to the doctrines he had taught. But Peter and John had been so long with Jesus, and imbibed so much of his spirit, that they were not afraid to preach his gospel in the face of his bitterest enemies. By some of their first and most successful discourses, they awakened the enmity and opposition of the ecclesiastical rulers, who laid hold on them, and put them in prison. The next day, however, they set them at liberty, after expressly forbidding them to speak or teach any more in the name of Jesus. But the apostles chose to regard God rather than man, and continued to preach with great success, without farther opposition, until Stephen, who was full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then his enemies arose, and procured his condemnation and death. "And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." "Now," says the sacred historian in the context, "they who were scattered abroad upon

the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they came to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus; and the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was at Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord."

Barnabas was a Levite, of the country of Cyprus, and was, probably, converted by the instrumentality of Peter, on the day that five thousand embraced the gospel; and when perhaps a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith. He was one of the most eminent preachers in his day, and attracted the particular notice of the apostles, who changed his name from Joses to Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation; or, as it might be rendered, the son of exhortation, or the son of a prophet. But his character, rather than his name, deserves peculiar attention. "He was a good man." His heart had been renewed and sanctified by the special grace of God. And besides, he was "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." These are phrases that properly signify his supernatural and miraculous gifts, which were then very common to private christians, as well as to ministers of the gospel. His saving grace and supernatural gifts both concurred to qualify him for his sacred office, and had a happy influence upon his ministerial labors. For it is said, in plain reference to his excellent character, "and much people was added unto the Lord;" that is, by his preaching and pious exertions in the work of the ministry. But since the faith of miracles and all other supernatural gifts have long ago been withdrawn from the church of Christ, it is only the holiness, the benevolence, or saving grace of Barnabas, that applies to the ministerial character at the present day. And taking the text in this restricted sense, it naturally leads us to inquire, what peculiar influence a holy heart will have upon a minister of the gospel.

A holy heart is the seat of all holy or gracious affections; and these are the source of all the holy and virtuous actions which are really acceptable in the sight of God. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." A good heart constitutes a good man. A new heart constitutes a new man. As soon as God gives a

man a new heart, he becomes a new creature; old things pass away, and all things become new. As soon as God gave Barnabas a good heart, he instantaneously became a good man, and morally prepared for every good work. And this is true of every one to whom God gives a new, a holy, or a gracious heart. Such a heart will have a governing influence over all the powers and faculties of his mind; over all his internal views, purposes, and designs; and consequently over all his external conduct. It is not the understanding, nor any other natural faculty of the soul, that governs a man in all his moral actions; but his heart alone. So far as his heart is holy and benevolent, just so far it will sanctify whatever he does; whether he acts in a private or public capacity, or whether he sustains a civil or sacred office. But we are now to consider only that peculiar influence, which a holy heart will have upon one who designs to preach the everlasting gospel.

First: A holy heart will influence him to desire and undertake the sacred work of the ministry from the only pure and proper motives. Under the influence of grace, he will not desire to preach the gospel and take the charge of souls, merely because he has had a public education, nor merely because he cannot pursue any other business with equal reputation and profit; but he will desire the office of a bishop, because it is a good office; and affords the best opportunity of promoting the glory of God, in the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints. Having been thoroughly convinced of his own moral depravity and just desert of eternal destruction; and having been made a partaker of the divine nature, by having the love of God shed abroad in his heart; he will feel a tender and benevolent concern for perishing sinners, and ardently desire to be made the happy instrument of saving them from the wrath to come. Accordingly, he will undertake the work of the ministry, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. He will seek first the kingdom of God, and make all his own interest subservient to it. The benevolence of Barnabas led him to preach the gospel from pure, disinterested motives. "Having land, he sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." He meant to endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; and not entangle himself with the affairs of this life, that he might please him who had chosen him to be a soldier. Though Paul was a young man of high expectations and worldly prospects, yet, as soon as his heart was moulded into the spirit of the gospel, he chose to preach it at the risk of every earthly interest. He solemnly declares that "when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that

I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." As soon as Christ called Matthew, he left his lucrative office, and as soon as he called Simon and Andrew, James and John, they left their nets, to follow the Saviour and preach the gospel. It was a benevolent heart that influenced each of these primitive preachers to obey the call of Christ, take up the cross, and plead his cause, even at the risk of life. And it is always owing to the peculiar and powerful influence of a gracious heart, that any man ever undertakes the self denying work of preaching the gospel and of feeding the flock of God, from truly Christian and laudable motives.

Secondly: The heart of benevolence will sweetly constrain a minister of the gospel to devote himself unreservedly to his great and good work. Having undertaken it of choice, he will pursue it of choice. He will feel a reluctance to intermeddle with any secular concerns, and regret even necessary avocations from his high and holy calling. He will find his need of all his time and of all his talents, to fulfil the duties of his sacred office. He will not unnecessarily suffer any of his personal or domestic concerns to divert his attention or his affections from his ministerial duties. He will read, he will study, and he will employ every proper method to qualify himself more and more for his arduous work; to which, after all, he will feel himself very unequal. Agreeably to the apostle's direction, he will give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine; he will habitually meditate upon these things, and give himself wholly to them, that his profiting may appear to all.

Thirdly: The good and honest heart of a minister will always cause him to preach what he believes to be the most essential and profitable truths of the gospel, however displeasing they may be to many of his people. He will not shun, through fear or favor, to declare what he considers as the whole counsel of God; but will endeavor, by the plainest manifestation of the truth, to approve himself to his own conscience, and to the conscience of every one of his hearers. Christ and his apostles found great opposition to the pure and unpalatable doctrines which they preached; and every faithful minister ever since their day, has found the same kind, though not the same degree, of opposition. But the heart of benevolence is the heart of a martyr, which takes away the fear of man, and gives a mouth and a wisdom which none can gainsay or resist. How often did Barnabas and Paul meet with violent opposition on account of the doctrines they taught! But their benevolent hearts would not suffer them, on any considerations, to withhold or to disguise any of those important truths, which Christ had

commanded them, and which they had solemnly engaged to preach. They could both sincerely say, "We are not as many which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." And Paul was not afraid to ask his own conscience, "Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Though some thought Paul was their enemy because he told them the truth, yet his benevolent heart would not permit him to keep back any thing which he supposed would be profitable to them. And an honest and benevolent heart will have the same happy influence upon any minister of the gospel; and never fail to dispose him to preach what he believes to be the most important truths, whether they please or displease his people.

Fourthly: A holy heart will inspire a minister of the gospel with a holy fervency and zeal in discharging the duties of his office. Pure benevolence is the most active principle in the universe. It will always kindle into zeal in the pursuit of any noble and important object, which cannot be attained without vigorous and ardent exertions. God's love to mankind kindled into zeal to overcome every thing that stood in the way of the work of redemption. Christ's love to his Father kindled into zeal to purge the temple, and maintain the purity of his sacred institutions. Love to God and love to men in the heart of a minister will operate in the same manner; and kindle into zeal to fulfil the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus, and to promote the great design of the gospel. The benevolence of Barnabas and Paul fired them with a holy and ardent zeal to travel from place to place, and from one country to another, and to expose themselves to every species of dangers; for the sake of extending the Redeemer's kingdom, and of saving immortal souls who were perishing for lack of vision. They were not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. They prayed, they preached, and they exhorted, with a zeal and animation which carried conviction to every mind, that they were sincerely engaged to promote the glory of God and the salvation of sinners. Their zeal was always in proportion to their benevolence, to their success, and to the difficulties which they had to encounter. Success inspired them with a zeal to pursue their great and good work. But we never find them more animated and zealous, than when they were violently opposed by men of power, men of learning, and the malignant populace. Their zeal rose superior to all opposition, and never failed to overcome it. Holy love is the essence of holy zeal in a minister of the gospel, and will keep pace with both his success and his want of success among his

people. Their zeal to hear and embrace the gospel, will enliven his zeal to preach it; and, on the other hand, their zeal to oppose and resist the force of divine truth, will increase his zeal to preach with greater plainness and pungency.

Fifthly: A gracious and benevolent heart will enable and dispose a minister of the gospel to preach in a distinguishing and experimental manner. He will know how to distinguish true religion from superstition, from enthusiasm, and from every species of false religion. He will have a general and infallible standard in his own mind, by which he will be able to compare and distinguish real Christianity from every counterfeit which bears a resemblance of it. His infallible standard will be pure, disinterested benevolence; and this standard he will endeavor to make his people see and apply. And this will enable them to try the false spirits which have gone into the world, and which so often deceive the unwary and the uninstructed. Having experienced the heart of an enemy and the heart of a friend of God, he will be able to point divine truth at the heart and conscience of every hearer, and make him know what manner of person he is. He will take the sinner's heart and show it to him. He will take the saint's heart and show it to him. He will clearly unfold and describe the various and inconsistent exercises of the sinner's heart, and the various and essentially different exercises in the hearts of christians. He will not leave his hearers to apply the truths he delivers; but he will apply his discourses himself, with peculiar discernment and pertinency, to all the various characters which he discovers among his people, and make them all sensible that he knows their hearts better than they do themselves. A gracious heart is so essential to a distinguishing and experimental preacher, that no one can be such a preacher without such a heart.

Sixthly: A holy heart will make a minister of the gospel a good casuist, and enable him to converse properly with his people upon all their spiritual concerns. Many difficult cases of this kind often occur, and especially in times of religious attention; and it requires peculiar knowledge of the human heart to converse wisely and profitably with sinners in stupidity, with sinners in distress, and with saints in darkness or in doubt, or under the delusions of the great adversary. But a minister, who is acquainted with the hearts of both saints and sinners, and who is not ignorant of the devices and delusions of Satan, knows how to converse with all these descriptions of persons, so as to give them light, conviction, or comfort, as their various and difficult cases require. Barnabas excelled as a casuist. He was the son of exhortation and the son of consolation. When he came to Antioch and found many rejoicing

in the grace of God, he conversed with them about their inward views and feelings, and exhorted them to cleave to the Lord with all their hearts. He knew that such young converts were, in many respects, greatly exposed to danger; and as a wise and faithful casuist he admonished them not to trust in their own hearts, but to trust in the power and grace of God to guard them against every spiritual enemy. It is of great importance that a minister should know how to show inquiring sinners the plague of their own hearts, to answer their groundless objections against duty, to drive them from all their refuges of lies, and to prevent their building their hopes of the divine favor upon any false and sandy foundation. It requires no less attention, discernment, and fidelity in a minister, to treat those properly who have just begun to entertain a hope of a saving change. They often express their fears of being deceived, and their ardent desire to know the distinguishing marks of special grace, while they inwardly lean to their own understanding and trust in their own hearts. But a discerning and faithful minister will deal plainly with them; and if possible take away the grounds of their false hopes, and point out the only way to obtain solid peace and comfort. In discoursing with gloomy and desponding saints, he will sagaciously discover the causes of their darkness and distress, and clearly exhibit those truths which are the best adapted to dissipate all the clouds which hang over their minds, and to give them light and joy in the God of their salvation. Though a minister may preach instructively with the bare knowledge of the doctrines of religion, yet he cannot converse instructively with either saints or sinners in distress, without that experimental knowledge of vital piety which flows from a renewed and sanctified heart.

Seventhly: A heart of true, disinterested benevolence will dispose a minister of Christ to deny himself, take up the cross, and prefer the spiritual good of his people to his own temporal good. No men have been called to make greater sacrifices of their worldly interests than the ministers of the gospel. This was certainly the case in the primitive days of Christianity. The apostles were called to forsake all for Christ, to give up every earthly interest, and to rely alone upon Providence to supply all their necessary wants. But their charity never failed of producing its genuine effects. Their love to Christ and his cause led them to make every sacrifice which their ministerial duty required. Paul said, "I have coveted no man's silver or gold, or apparel." Again he said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to

be hungry, both to abound and suffer need." Nor did he hesitate to tell the Corinthians, "Behold, the third time I am ready to come unto you, and I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not yours but you." Though Paul said all these things to the Corinthians, yet he let them know that he had a just claim upon them, on account of his preaching, for a comfortable support. "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they who wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." The same benevolent spirit which induced the apostle to give up his just rights and his just dues, rather than to obstruct the cause of Christ and the good of souls; will induce any other minister to give up his just rights and his just dues, rather than forsake his flock, and expose them to perish by a famine of the word, or to be scattered and destroyed by grievous wolves in sheep's clothing. A benevolent heart will never fail to have a peculiar and happy influence upon this part of a minister's conduct towards his people, which will give them irresistible evidence that he really values the salvation of their souls above his own private personal interest.

Eighthly: The same benevolence of heart will be a spirit of grace and supplication; and dispose a minister to pray constantly, sincerely, and fervently for the special influence of the Divine Spirit, to give energy and success to the gospel he preaches. As he will continually feel his need of divine influence in doing his duty, so he will continually feel the need of divine influence to open the hearts of his people to receive the truth in love. A minister can only speak to the ear, but God can speak to the heart. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but it is only God who can give the increase. This Paul was willing to say; and this every gracious minister is ready to acknowledge before God. Though we may not say nor believe, that every minister is successful in exact proportion to his benevolence and prayers for success; yet we must suppose, that the holy, benevolent, and fervent prayers of a minister have a powerful moral tendency to draw down the special influence of the Spirit upon himself and upon his people. The apostles proposed the appointment of deacons, that they might give themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." They considered continual praying as neces-

sary as continual preaching, in order to a successful discharge of the ministerial office. And this seems to be plainly intimated in the text, in respect to Barnabas. It is said, "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord." We are not told, indeed, whether his peculiar success was principally owing to his zealous preaching, or to his fervent prayers; but we have reason to believe, that his fervent prayers had as great moral influence in procuring his success, as his plain and pungent preaching. A minister, of a pious and benevolent heart, will never cease to pray for himself that he may preach, and to pray for his people that they may hear the truth in love; and that all his ministerial labors may be crowned with abundant success.

It must be observed once more,

Ninthly: A benevolent heart will have a peculiar and happy influence over the whole life of a minister. It will dispose him to keep his own vineyard, and watch over all his external conduct. It will teach him how to rule his own house, as well as to take care of the church of God. It will make him courteous and hospitable to friends and strangers, as well as kind and charitable to the poor and needy. It will make him easy, condescending, and instructive, in all his intercourse and conversation among his people. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips." So long as a minister acts under the influence of a benevolent heart, he will never violate the laws of religion, morality, or propriety; but pay a strict regard to whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, and to whatsoever things are of good report. He will magnify his office, and adorn his ministerial character, in every place and in every situation, in which he is called to appear and to act. He will not conform to any of the false customs and manners of the world; but set a bright example of piety before his people, which they will be bound to follow, and which if they do follow, it will lead them in the strait and narrow path to eternal life. Such is the great, universal, and happy influence, that a holy and benevolent heart will have upon the whole life and labors of a minister of the gospel.

The whole tenor of this discourse leads us to remark, in the first place, that real holiness is the highest ornament of the ministerial character. Brilliant talents, deep erudition, great opulence, and exalted stations, diffuse the highest glory around the characters of poets, philosophers, and statesmen. But nothing

can adorn the servants of Christ so much, as their imbibing and exhibiting his pure and amiable spirit. He was perfectly holy and without sin; and it is their duty and dignity, to make it appear to the world that they have the same mind in them, that was also in Christ Jesus; and are governed, in all their conduct, by the same noble and benevolent motives, which induced him to suffer and die on the cross, to glorify his Father and save the souls of men. It is true, ministers may possess superior abilities, acquire extensive knowledge, and abound in the blessings of Providence; but these things will be no ornament to their peculiar and sacred character, unless they are sincerely consecrated to God upon the altar of a benevolent heart. Those preachers of the gospel, who possess and display the largest measures of holiness, do the most honor to their office, to the cause of Christ, and to themselves. Under the Old Testament dispensation, God was pleased to take a striking method, to teach the ministers of the sanctuary that holiness was their highest ornament. He commanded the High Priest to wear a crown upon his head, and upon the crown a plate or leaf of gold having this motto, *Holiness to the Lord.* This inscription was designed to be the badge of his office and the emblem of his heart, in the view of the world. The beauties of holiness never fade; they adorn the Christian minister, as much as they did the Jewish priest. And since God has declared holiness to be the supreme ornament of his ministers, they cannot aspire after any higher attainment than to be holy as he is holy.

The subject suggests, in the second place, that a good ministerial character will always justly deserve and command the deep respect and veneration of mankind. The excellences of holiness may be more clearly and advantageously displayed by the ministers of the gospel, than by any other order or profession of men. A king may reign in righteousness, and a general may discover the benevolence of his heart, in conquering the enemies of his country. But a prince or a hero cannot display holiness in such an amiable and striking manner, as a minister of the gospel in the performance of the sacred offices of his sacred function. When he addresses the throne of grace; when he delivers divine messages by divine authority; and when he administers the solemn ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper; there seems to be an intimate connection between the ministerial and the divine character, which never fails to command the inward respect and veneration of all men, whether they are friendly or unfriendly to revealed religion. That religious instinct, if I may so call it, which is inherent in human nature, constrains every person to revere the sacred character of a holy and faithful minister; and to feel in a measure as the Lycaonians

felt towards Barnabas and Paul, when their warm imaginations painted them as gods come down in the likeness of men. If we should consult the history of all Christian nations, we should undoubtedly find, that they have generally held their godly ministers in higher estimation, than those who have filled the most dignified offices of state. This has always been owing to the intrinsic, and superior excellence of the ministerial character, when adorned with the beauties of holiness. And it can hardly be denied, that the holy and faithful ministers of the gospel are really worthy of that superior respect and esteem which all men feel, and which most men are willing to express towards the ambassadors of Christ.

This naturally leads me to observe, that very few ministers of the gospel, at the present day, have deserved and commanded more deep and general respect, than the late pastor of this people, whose precious remains now lie before us. I have been intimately acquainted with him for almost forty years. In that long course of time, I have journeyed with him on various occasions; I have preached with him in various places; and I have spent a great many pleasant and profitable hours with him in free and familiar conversation. But he is gone, and I am left. It is now a duty which I owe to him to delineate his character with justice and impartiality.

Mr. Sanford's native place was Milford, in Connecticut. His parents were pious and reputable. His father was a friend and admirer of godly ministers. He not only treated them with peculiar hospitality, but made his house their asylum at a time when they exposed themselves to the rigor of the law by merely preaching the gospel of peace. He was more especially attached to the Rev. David Brainerd; and to testify his respect to that pious and eminent preacher, he named his son David, whom he early proposed, in submission to Providence, to prepare for the work of the ministry. He did not live, however, to see his son's education completed. But after Mr. Sanford had received the honors of Yale College, his filial affection prompted him to gratify his father's wishes, and he accordingly put himself under the theological instruction of the Rev. Dr. Bellamy. But he soon found himself so totally destitute of real religion, that he durst not continue in the study of divinity. He then removed to Great Barrington, where he settled, and attended the preaching of the Rev. Dr. Hopkins. Though he admired the piety and abilities of the man, yet he could not bear the pure, evangelical doctrines which he plainly taught and forcibly applied. But notwithstanding all his efforts to resist the force of divine truth, it finally reached his conscience, and threw him into great distress of mind. He deter-

mined to seek and strive and use all the means in his power to obtain relief; but all his false refuges failed him, and he could find no relief; until one Sabbath, in the forenoon, just as the preacher named the psalm, he experienced a very great and happy change in his feelings. And from that time forward he loved and admired the doctrines which he had before hated and opposed; and found great satisfaction in the duties and enjoyments of religion. Being satisfied of his sincere love to Christ, he named his name, and joined himself to the church; who gladly received him into their Christian communion, and soon afterwards made choice of him as a deacon, though he never accepted that office. His former difficulty being removed, he now naturally turned his thoughts towards the study which he had once pursued and relinquished. He acquainted his friends with his desire to preach the gospel; but their advice as well as his worldly affairs seemed to forbid his going into the ministry. Though he esteemed their advice, and meant to pay a proper regard to his secular concerns, yet he resolved to follow the benevolent bias of his own heart, and undertake to preach the gospel of Christ from the purest motives. As soon as he once attempted to preach, he convinced his friends that he had made a wise choice, and engaged in a work for which he was eminently qualified both by nature and grace.

The Author of nature endowed Mr. Sanford with a rich variety of rare and superior talents. He possessed a quick apprehension, a clear and sound judgment, a lively imagination, and an uncommon knowledge of human nature. These intellectual powers, sanctified by divine grace, fitted him to shine with peculiar lustre in every branch of his ministerial office. But perhaps he appeared to the best advantage as a speaker, for which his body as well as his mind was peculiarly formed. He had a piercing eye, a significant countenance, a majestic appearance, and a strong, clear, melodious voice, which he was able to modulate with ease and propriety. I know no man of any profession, in the circle of my acquaintance, who surpassed him in natural eloquence. He was able to move any passion which he wished to move, whether love or hatred, hope or fear, joy or sorrow. He knew every avenue to the human heart, and could make the deepest impressions upon it.

It will be thirty-seven years next Saturday since he was ordained to the pastoral office in this place, and unreservedly devoted himself to the work of the ministry; which he uniformly pursued, we have reason to believe, under the peculiar influence of a benevolent heart. He preached with great plainness and fidelity. He never shunned to declare his real senti-

ments, but endeavored to exhibit them in the most perspicuous and intelligible light. He was no trimmer or man pleaser, but boldly delivered such truths as are the most disagreeable to the human heart. Instead of being a dull or heavy, he was a very warm, zealous, and laborious preacher. While he was in the pulpit, he appeared willing to spend and be spent; and to exert all his powers with the utmost vigor in pleading the cause of Christ. He did not preach superficially, but sentimentally. His discourses were filled with weighty truths, which he skilfully directed not only to the understanding, but to the conscience and heart of his hearers. He preached much upon experimental subjects, which were calculated to distinguish true religion from false, and saints from sinners. He excelled in taking off the mask from hypocrites, and in making false professors appear to themselves and to others in their true light. He represented true religion extremely amiable and beautiful, while he painted false religion in the most odious and detestable colors. He preached abundantly in season and out of season, at home and abroad. He could meet any emergency, and prepare and adapt a discourse to any occasion, upon the shortest notice. Though he studied his sermons and arranged his leading ideas correctly, yet he chose to cast his discourses into a popular form, and to deliver them extempore; which gave him the best opportunity to exert the whole force of his eloquence, which never failed to arrest the attention, and solemnize the minds of his hearers. But if his mode of preaching was not the most instructive, yet his mode of conversation was remarkably so. In private discourse, he had a peculiar talent at explaining scripture, detecting error, and vindicating truth. He spent much time in discoursing with the sick and with others upon religious subjects, and in giving them such instruction, counsel, and consolation, as scarcely any other man could give. He visited his people from house to house; and gave them unquestionable evidence, that he preferred their spiritual good to his own temporal interest. He exercised much self denial through the whole course of his ministerial life. He carried his people upon his heart, and gave himself to prayer for the effusions of the Divine Spirit upon them; and there is good reason to believe that his fervent prayers were heard, for his labors were peculiarly blessed, and much people was added unto the Lord. Though for several years after he was ordained he had but little success, and only now and then a single individual was hopefully converted, yet, in the years 1784 and 1785, there was a great and general effusion of the Divine Spirit upon his people; and a very large number, considering the extent of his parish, gave satisfactory evidence of

a saving change, and made a public profession of religion. There is, therefore, good ground to hope, that God has given him many souls, as the seal of his ministry and the crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

He was formed for activity and extensive usefulness. He never appeared to be more at ease and in his proper element, than while he was conversing or acting in large public bodies. He was often called to attend the ordination of ministers, and oftener still to attend ecclesiastical councils, where he dsplayed great ability and powerful influence. In this way, he has been extensively useful, and done much to promote the cause of Christianity in various parts of this State. Many churches and congregations, who have derived great benefit from his counsels and exertions, will hold him in long and grateful remembrance.

Though he had lived to the common age of man, and though he had been, for some time past, taken off from his public labors, yet his death is to be sincerely regretted. It is a loss to the world to have godly men, and especially godly ministers, removed from it. This Association, with whom he had been so long connected, and at the head of which he had presided with so much dignity, will lament his decease; and improve it as a solemn admonition, to be ready also to leave their flocks and their friends, and to prepare to give an account of their stewardship to Him, who died for them, and gave them the peculiar privilege of preaching his gospel to perishing sinners.

The people in this place have abundant reason to bless God, that he sent such an able and faithful minister among them, and continued him so long in their service. You have been, my friends, highly distinguished; and there is no doubt that many of you have highly revered and respected your late pastor, who has preached, and prayed, and labored so long to promote your everlasting good. You will soon meet in a better world, where you will be for ever each other's joy and crown of rejoicing. But if any of this church or people have remained impenitent and unbelieving, under the instructions, warnings, reproofs, and prayers of their deceased pastor, let them seriously consider, that the time will come when they shall know, with astonishment, "that a prophet has been among them." May God graciously grant, that the seed which his servant has sown in their minds may spring up, and bring forth fruit to eternal life. And may the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls take this bereaved church and congregation under his merciful protection, and in his own best time send them another pastor after his own heart.

The children and grand children of the deceased, who are

principal mourners on this occasion, will suffer me to sympathize with them under their sore and heavy bereavement. They have no occasion for instruction, because they have been instructed by one of the best of teachers. They have no occasion to be reminded of their great loss, because they most sensibly feel it. They know that death, by one stroke, has taken away their father, their minister, and their best friend on earth. But let them sing aright of mercy, as well as of judgment, and exercise that gratitude, as well as submission, which they owe to God. Let them imbibe the pious spirit, follow the bright example, and live the heavenly life of him whom they this day lament; and may their last end be like his. Amen.

SERMON XXV.

CARE OF A GOOD PASTOR FOR HIS PEOPLE.

FUNERAL OF REV. JOHN CLEAVELAND, A. M., WRENTHAM, NORTH PARISH, WHO DIED FEBRUARY 1, 1815, AGED 65.

For I have no man like minded who will naturally care for your state.—Phil. ii. 20.

Though Paul was now a prisoner at Rome, yet he felt such a tender regard for the Philippians, that he proposed to send a friend of his and of theirs to inquire into their spiritual concerns, and to inform him whether they were growing or declining christians. And in order to prepare them to receive his messengers cordially, and to open their minds to him freely and without reserve, he mentions his name; and, by one masterly stroke, he draws his whole ministerial character in miniature. He says, "I trust in the Lord Jesus, to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state. For I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father he hath served with me in the gospel. Him, therefore, I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me." The apostle does not mean to insinuate, by the comparison he makes between Timothy and other ministers, that they were totally destitute of piety, and benevolence; but only to represent the brightest trait in Timothy's character, in a very strong and striking light. Though Timothy had many ministerial gifts and qualifications, yet that which principally adorned and beautified his character, was his peculiar concern for the good of souls. In this important

point, in which ministers are so apt to fail, he greatly excelled. It seemed to be as natural for him to seek the good of others, as it was natural for others to seek their own good. This, we may presume, was the apostle's meaning in drawing the character of Timothy. And according to this construction of the text, it suggests a truth very proper to be considered and applied on the present solemn occasion. It is this:

That every good minister feels a tender concern for the good of his people.

I shall endeavor to show that this is true, and why it is true, of every good minister.

I. I am to show that every good minister feels a tender concern for the good of his people.

Every good minister is a good man. He possesses a spirit of pure benevolence to all mankind. Good ministers, like all other good men, have experienced a saving change. Their stony hearts have been taken away by the special influence of the Divine Spirit, and tender, benevolent, feeling hearts have been given them. True benevolence always disposes men to love others as they love themselves, and to seek the good of others as they seek their own good. As this spirit reigns in the heart of every good minister, so he naturally feels a tender concern for the good of his people. While Paul was under the entire dominion of selfishness, he sought his own things, and violently opposed the things of Jesus Christ; but when the love of God was shed abroad in his heart, he preferred the cause of Christ and the good of souls to every personal interest. "Brethren," says he to the Romans, "my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." With this benevolent language the heart of every good minister readily accords; but he expresses his ardent desire for the salvation of others in much stronger terms. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." The sincerity of these desires he sufficiently confirmed through the whole course of his ministerial life. He cheerfully sacrificed his ease, his interest, his reputation, and every earthly enjoyment, to carry the gospel round the world, and promote the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. He also tells us that Timothy was like minded, and felt the same tender concern for the good of souls. There is no doubt but the apostles and primitive preachers of the gospel had a larger portion of love, and zeal, and fortitude, and self denial, than even their pious successors have generally possessed; but we must believe that

every godly minister has such a sincere concern for the good of his people that he would, if called to the trial, sacrifice every personal interest, to promote their spiritual and everlasting benefit. The spirit of benevolence is the spirit of a martyr, and knows no bounds to self denial. It will give up any inferior for a superior good. The state of the Christian world is very different now from what it has been, and from what it may be again, in times to come. Few ministers now are called to make the same sacrifices of personal interest for the good of their people and the cause of Christ, that some of their fathers in this country were called to make. Many pious ministers at this day, however, do make such sacrifices of personal interest, as to leave no room to doubt but that they would freely give up all, for the honor of Christ and the salvation of souls, if their duty required it. They display the same spirit, though not to the same degree, that the apostles and primitive preachers of the gospel displayed, in all their trials and sufferings in the cause of Christ. But whether ministers in general do or do not discover so much benevolence as their duty requires, and as the times give them opportunities to discover; yet it is certain, that all those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, carry their people upon their hearts, and feel deeply concerned for their spiritual and eternal good. This leads me to inquire,

II. Why this is true of every good minister. Here several obvious and weighty reasons occur, why a faithful minister naturally feels a tender concern for the good of his people.

In the first place: He realizes that God has committed them into his hands, and, for a time, suspended their present and future good upon his care and fidelity. When God confides this sacred and solemn trust to a minister, he virtually says to him, as he said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." This solemn consideration lies with continual weight upon the mind of every faithful minister, and serves to fix his eyes and his heart upon the people whom God has committed to his particular care. Though he wishes well to every religious society, still he feels a stronger obligation to take peculiar care of his own flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made him an overseer. While he obeys the divine command in watching over his people and feeding them with knowledge and understanding, he naturally feels a strong and warm attachment to their spiritual and eternal interests.

Secondly: A faithful minister feels a tender concern for the good of his people, because they have freely and voluntarily committed themselves to his pastoral watch and care. It is one

of the most invaluable and unalienable rights of a religious society, to choose their own minister. And when they exercise this right, and freely choose a certain man to carry on the sacred work of the ministry among them, they pay great respect to him, and place great confidence in his fidelity. They justly expect, that he will naturally care for their state, and watch for their souls, as one who must give account; and a good minister cannot resist the force and obligation of these endearing motives to pastoral fidelity. The trust they have reposed in him, appears as important to him, as to them; and his concern for them is greater than their concern for themselves. He knows, better than they do, what tends to promote, or to obstruct their spiritual good; and feels a deep concern for them, when they imagine he has no occasion for the least anxiety or solicitude on their account. He feels concerned to instruct those, who do not wish to be instructed; to admonish those, who do not wish to be admonished; to reform those, who do not wish to be reformed; to guide those, who do not wish to be guided; to restrain those, who do not wish to be restrained; and to save those, who do not wish to be saved. Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, he feels himself bound to care for their spiritual state, and faithfully discharge every ministerial duty towards them. He is willing to spend, and to be spent for them, though the more abundantly he loves them, the less he be loved. Though some may wish, that he would relax his care and concern for them; yet this, instead of weakening, serves to increase his desires and exertions to promote the spiritual interests of all his people, who have placed so much confidence in his fidelity as to commit themselves to his pastoral watch and instruction. Like Paul, he can sincerely say to his flock, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all."

Thirdly: A pious minister feels a tender concern for his people, because he freely and solemnly engages to be their spiritual guide and watchman. He takes the oversight of his flock, "not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." He cheerfully devotes his time, his talents, his interests, and his influence, to the service of his people. His concern for their highest good is paramount to all his own private and personal concerns. He knows the worth of his own soul in the view of eternity, and he views his people in the same solemn and interesting light. He realizes that every soul which he has taken charge of, is worth more than the whole material world. This creates a deep and tender concern, lest any individual of his flock should perish through his unfaithfulness or neglect. He means to serve his people, rather than

himself. This Paul sincerely resolved to do. He says to christians, "Though I be free from all men, yet I have made myself servant to all." Again he says, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." And farthermore he says, "I seek not yours, but you." Every faithful minister is like minded, and considers himself as the servant of his people; and feels bound by his own voluntary vows and engagements, to guide every man, to teach every man, and to warn every man, that he may, if possible, present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. But the more solicitous he is to serve his people, and fulfil his own obligations to them, the more he is concerned, lest he should labor in vain, and spend his strength for nought and in vain. He knows that he must be to them, a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death. This is a concern, which the apostle represents as too great for human strength to bear; for he asks, "Who is sufficient for these things?" It made the prophet weep in secret places, and it has drawn tears from the eyes, and sighs from the heart of many a faithful minister; who could not endure the thought of being instrumental of destroying those, whom he ardently desired and endeavored to save. Those who of choice take the charge of precious and immortal souls, continually carry upon their minds a weight of cares superior to that of any other men.

Fourthly: Every good minister feels a tender concern for the good of his people, because he knows that his interest is inseparably connected with theirs. The spiritual and important relation between him and his people, creates a mutual and inseparable connection between their spiritual and eternal interests and his. He therefore as naturally cares for their spiritual good, as for his own. Whatever he does sincerely to promote their spiritual benefit, will eventually promote his own spiritual benefit. This pleasing consideration had great influence upon the apostle Paul; and fired his breast with peculiar zeal and fortitude, in all his efforts and sufferings to promote the salvation of those, to whom he preached the saving truths of the gospel. He often mentioned this consoling and animating motive. To the Corinthians he said, "As ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus." To the Philippians he said, "My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord." "Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice

in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." "For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me." To the Thessalonians he said, "Brethren, we were comforted over you in all our afflictions and distress, by your faith; for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." And he anticipated much greater happiness in meeting them at the last day. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." Under the impression of such hopes and expectations, every pious minister as naturally cares for the good of his people, as for his own good; because he knows that so far as he sincerely promotes their holiness and happiness, he will promote his own holiness and happiness to all eternity. His interests and theirs are inseparably connected; as they will be his, so he will be their crown of rejoicing, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Finally: Every good minister feels greatly concerned for the good of his people, because he views their eternal interests inseparably connected with the eternal interests of Christ. Christ has an interest in believers, as well as they an interest in him. They were promised to him, as the reward of his sufferings and death, in performing the work of redemption. They were the joy set before him, in the view of which he freely endured all the pains and reproaches of the cross. And just before his death, he claimed the fulfilment of his Father's promise. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Whatever promotes the interests of believers, equally promotes the interests of Christ. And on the other side, whatever promotes the interests of Christ, equally promotes the interests of believers. Accordingly, the apostle says, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Again he says, "Let no man glory in men; for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." The pious minister, who undertakes to feed the sheep and lambs of Christ, loves him supremely, and seeks the interests of his kingdom above every other interest. His love to Christ excites his love to his people, and fills him with a tender concern to promote their eternal interests, which will infallibly promote the eternal interests of Christ. "Therefore," says the apostle, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they

may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." And he represents Timothy as naturally concerned for the spiritual interests of the Philippians, because their interests were connected with the interests of Christ. "For I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Timothy considered the things of believers, as the things of Christ; and felt a deep concern to promote their interests, because their interests were inseparably connected with the honor and glory and interests of Christ. It now appears, I trust, that every good minister feels a tender concern for the good of his people, from the purest and best motives.

I have endeavored to adapt my discourse to the present mournful occasion; and I am persuaded that every one has clearly perceived that I have had an eye, through the whole, to the most prominent and discriminating trait in the character of the late pious and excellent pastor of this people.

The Rev. Mr. CLEAVELAND descended from a highly respectable and pious family. His venerable father was a pattern of piety, and an ornament to the Christian and clerical profession. He stood high among the first of faithful preachers of the gospel, and zealous promoters of the cause of Christ and the good of souls. He had a tender concern for the best interests of his people, and for the best good of his family. He walked within his house with a perfect heart, and brought up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He originally designed to give his son, now deceased, a public education, and actually prepared him for admission into Yale College; but his purposes were broken by his son's low and languishing state of health. Though, like Timothy, he had been piously educated, and from his youth had well known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation; yet he did not, in his own view, experience a saving change until he arrived to riper years. He had a capacity and taste for learning, and improved every advantage and opportunity afforded him, to cultivate his mind, and acquire useful and especially religious knowledge. While he was employed in the service and defence of his country, he saw human nature in its fairest and foulest forms, and gained an extensive acquaintance with the higher and lower grades of men in civil society. Being sanctified by divine grace, and enriched with a large portion of speculative, experimental, and practical knowledge, he was, in these respects, amply prepared for the good work for which he had an early and strong predilection. He venerated, as he said, the ministerial character, from his youth, and preferred the work of the ministry to any other employment in life. At

length, Providence opened the way for his pursuing the sacred calling, to which his heart was so warmly attached. In the year 1785, he was ordained over the church in Stoneham, where he faithfully discharged the duties of his office until the year 1794, when he was honorably dismissed from his pastoral relation to that religious society. In the year 1798, he was resettled in the work of the ministry in this place. From that period until last spring, which is a space of sixteen years, he constantly and faithfully performed the duties of his office among this people, and gave them unequivocal evidence, that his heart was in his work. He had a zeal according to knowledge; and his zeal directed and concentrated all his ministerial gifts and graces to one object, and that object was the good of his people. When any man confines his attention to one object, and employs all his powers and faculties in the pursuit of it, he is always zealously engaged to obtain it. Mr. Cleaveland was zealously affected in a good cause, which had a governing influence upon every thing he said and did. Though he was pleasant and entertaining in his private conversation, yet he always kept himself at a proper distance from every thing vain and trifling, and uniformly maintained that gravity of deportment which became his sacred office. No corrupt communication proceeded out of his mouth, but that which was good to the use of edifying, and which had a tendency to minister grace to the hearers. He possessed a singular talent at turning conversation to some useful subject, and at making pertinent and serious remarks with ease and propriety; which manifested his sincere and habitual concern to do good. Whether he went to the house of health, or to the house of sickness, or to the house of mourning, or to the house of joy and rejoicing, he seriously considered these seasons as so many opportunities of promoting the benefit of his people, and improved them to this pious and benevolent purpose. There is, I presume, scarcely a family, or a person in this place, who has not heard some seasonable instruction, or some seasonable admonition, or some sympathizing and consoling observations drop from his lips, on such occasions. His parochial visits were designed, not so much to gratify, as to edify his people, and promote their spiritual welfare. He was not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, not only on the Sabbath, but on every day of the week, as opportunities presented. Though these private ministerial duties were lighter shades in his character, yet they served to display and brighten the evidence of that sincere and tender concern for the state of his flock, which shone more conspicuously in his public labors. These he performed with an undivided attention, and from the

purest motives. He coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, or applause. He determined to know nothing among his people save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. The one great object which lay the nearest to his heart, was the good of souls; and this dictated the subjects of his public discourses, and the manner of his public speaking. He had a good understanding of the gospel scheme of salvation, and knew how to set the most important doctrines in a clear and profitable light. He dwelt much upon experimental religion; and drew the characters of saints and sinners with so much accuracy and clearness, that his hearers were constrained to discern the essential difference. His discourses were more solid than brilliant; more sentimental than declamatory; and better adapted to assist the memory, enlighten the understanding, awaken the conscience, and penetrate the heart, than to excite the admiration, or gratify the vain curiosity of his hearers. Had the pious poet heard and seen him preach, he could not have described his attitude and appearance in the pulpit with greater exactness.

> "I would express him, simple, grave, sincere,
> In doctrine uncorrupt, in language plain,
> And plain in manner. Decent, solemn, chaste,
> And natural in gesture. Much impressed
> Himself, as conscious of his awful charge;
> And anxious, mainly, that the flock he feeds
> May feel it too. Affectionate in look
> And tender in address, as well becomes
> A messenger of grace to guilty men."

Though Mr. Cleaveland preached the gospel, for some years, without much apparent success, yet more lately his public labors have been remarkably blest. There have been several seasons of religious attention among his people; and a large proportion of his flock have hopefully experienced a saving change, and have made a public profession of religion, and visibly conducted agreeably to their profession. He was a faithful servant in the house of God, and well knew how to lead in the exercise of that holy discipline, which is absolutely necessary to maintain the peace, the harmony and the purity of the church of Christ. And in the faithful discharge of this difficult and arduous duty, he conducted with great prudence, moderation and firmness. In a word, he diligently and faithfully performed every ministerial duty, so long as his health and strength continued; and after he was taken off from his public labors, he did not cease to feel and express a deep concern for the state of his flock. He visited and conversed with the sick and dying, and mourned with them that mourned. While he was well, he taught his people how to live; and when he was

sick, he taught them how to die. While his outward man was perishing, his inward man was renewed day by day. His sun did not set in a cloud, but in its full brightness. He retained the free and full exercise of all his rational powers, and had a lively anticipation of his approaching dissolution. But his faith and hope in his Divine Redeemer, disarmed death of its sting, and the grave of its terror. We have now good reason to believe, that he has died in the Lord, that he has rested from all his painful labors, and that he enjoys the ample reward of a good and faithful servant of Christ.

It is to be lamented, that the life and usefulness of this man of God have so soon come to a period. His age had not impaired his mental powers, nor unfitted him for the service of the sanctuary. For aught we can see, he might have been continued much longer a pillar in the church, and a blessing in the world. But God has been pleased to smile upon him, and to frown upon us. His death at this dark day, is a dark dispensation of Providence, which calls for mourning and submission.

The bereaved widow has just cause to mourn. God has poured out to her a bitter cup of the wormwood and the gall. He has taken away her dearest friend and best instructer. But what if one tender tie between her and her deceased friend be dissolved, is there not another more tender and important tie which remains, and shall never be dissolved? Were they not once joint heirs of the grace of life; and are they not still heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ? If his interests were once her interests, they are still her interests. And if her interests were once his interests, they are still his interests. And if their eternal interests are inseparably connected, then their short separation will be mutually beneficial, and work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The great and precious promises of the gospel forbid christians to sorrow for their departed Christian friends, as those who have no hope. When christians bury their Christian friends, they are indeed called to mourn, but to mourn in the lively exercise of faith and filial submission. The deepest mourner on this occasion has a strong claim upon the sympathy of all her Christian friends, and it becomes them to mingle their tears with hers. But it highly concerns her to renounce all undue dependence upon weak, frail, dying creatures, and to cast her cares and burdens upon Him, who is able and willing to sustain her. And may the God of all grace and consolation give her, and her adopted daughters, that peace which the world cannot give, nor take away.

The brothers and sisters of Mr. Cleaveland, and all his near relatives and friends, have met with a heavy loss. But have

they not reason to hope that he has gained unspeakably more, than they have lost? They may sorrow for themselves, but not for him. He has exhibited an example both of living and of dying, from which they may and ought to derive both consolation and benefit. If they follow him as he followed Christ, they will soon be with him, and with Christ; where there shall be no more sorrow or crying, but all tears shall be for ever wiped from their eyes.

"The fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" God is rapidly putting out one burning and shining light after another, in his golden candlesticks. There has been of late an uncommon mortality among ministers, in various places, and especially in this vicinity. Whether the Lord of the vineyard has called off these servants from their labors, in mercy to them, or in judgment to others, we have no right to say; but this we know, that the language of his word and providence to us is, "Be ye also ready." Brethren, our time is short, and our work is great. It is an evil day, and we need to redeem our time and employ every moment of it to the best advantage. Have we been like minded with that faithful servant of Christ, who has just finished his course, and given up his account? It concerns us most seriously to reflect upon the past, and to resolve upon the future. Let us work while the day lasts; that when the shadows of a long night shall reach us, we may be prepared to rest from our labors, and enjoy the rewards of the faithful. Has God given us the charge of our people? Have they committed their spiritual interests to our care? Have we solemnly bound ourselves to watch for their souls, as those who must give account? Are our eternal interests and theirs inseparably connected together; and the great interests of both inseparably connected with the infinitely more important interests of Christ? In the view of these mighty motives, can we be so unwise and so unfaithful, as to suffer any of our people to perish, by caring for our own things, and neglecting the things which belong to their everlasting peace? May it be our hearts' desire, and prayer to God, that we may save both ourselves and them that hear us.

This subject, I trust, applies with propriety, to the church and people in this place, on the present truly mournful occasion. They have received, and they have lost, an invaluable blessing in their late pastor. But few ministers have been like minded. None, perhaps, have felt and expressed a more sincere and tender regard for the good of their people, than Mr. Cleaveland uniformly felt and expressed for your highest good. He took you by the hand, when you were in peculiar need of such a kind and faithful guide. He has been willing to spend and to

be spent, for your salvation. He has lodged in your minds an irresistible evidence of his fidelity, through the whole course of his ministry among you. Having loved you at the first, he loved you to the end. You never stood higher in his affections, nor he higher in your esteem, than when he closed his eyes in death. You have abundant reason of gratitude to the great Bishop of souls, that he sent you such a faithful watchman; that he continued him so long among you; and that he crowned his labors with so much success. You have a right to mourn, but not to murmur, under your sore bereavement. The divine Redeemer, to whom it belongs to thrust forth laborers into his vineyard, may give you another amiable and faithful pastor, who shall be like minded, and care for your state. But this, in a measure, will depend upon your views, and feelings, and conduct, in your present bereaved and afflicted situation. You are now called to exercise a strong and lively faith in Him, who is the repairer of breaches. The instructions, the prayers, and the preaching of your deceased pastor, lay you under great and endearing obligations to pursue the great interests which he pursued; and to consider, that your interests and his are still connected, and never will be separated. His joy will be your joy, his crown your crown, and the crown and joy of both will be the crown and joy of Him in whom ye have believed. Christ says to this little flock, "Because I live, ye shall live also." The cause of Christ here is now confided to his friends in this place. O may they be faithful to him, to themselves, and to them that are without! Soon you must follow him, who is gone and will never return. Live as he lived, and you may hope to die as he died, and to meet him at the right hand of your Judge in peace. But how will any who have hated instruction and despised reproof, be able to meet their deceased and faithful pastor at the last day? Unless they repent and believe, they must be for ever separated from him, and from all good, and lie down in everlasting sorrow. And let me ask this whole assembly, whether you are prepared to meet your faithful ministers at the bar of Christ; for you must give account how you hear, as well as they, how they preach. Be entreated then to "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you." "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

SERMON XXVI.

JOY OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER IN VIEW OF ETERNITY.

FUNERAL OF REV. TIMOTHY DICKINSON, HOLLISTON, WHO DIED JULY 6, 1813, AGED 52.

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. — 2 Timothy, iv. 6, 7, 8.

It appears very probable, that this second epistle to Timothy was the last letter which the apostle Paul ever wrote. He was now a prisoner at Rome, and had every reason to expect to fall a victim to the implacable malice of his mortal enemies. In this solemn situation, he was divinely moved to write once more to Timothy, whom he greatly loved and esteemed; and to exhort him, in the most serious and affectionate manner, to perform every part of his great and arduous work, under an habitual sense of his future and final account. After giving him a variety of useful cautions and directions, he proceeds to say, "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine." And to impress this charge the more deeply on his heart, he assures him, from his own happy experience, that great consolation may be derived from the due discharge of the gospel ministry. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: Hence-

forth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." While Paul the aged was thus waiting for death and looking into eternity, he found great peace and joy flowing from a consciousness of having faithfully performed the duties of his sacred office. We have, therefore, his dying testimony to this plain and important truth:

That a faithful minister may have good reasons to rejoice, in the nearest views of eternity.

To illustrate this subject, it seems proper, in the first place, to delineate the character of a faithful minister; and then mention some of the good reasons he may have to rejoice, in the nearest views of eternity.

In delineating the character of a faithful minister, the first thing to be observed is, that he loves the gospel which he preaches. Ministers, like all other men, are by nature morally depraved, and entirely destitute of love to the gospel, which displays the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Paul, before his conversion, was a bitter enemy to Christ, and to all his peculiar and humiliating doctrines. But after he knew the grace of God in truth, he sincerely loved that Saviour whom he had before persecuted; that gospel which he had before hated; and that cause which he had before endeavored to destroy. This appears from his own account of himself. "I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am." Though one who is destitute of grace may understand and preach the peculiar doctrines of grace, yet he is by no means a faithful minister of the gospel. Paul puts and decides this case in respect to himself. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." It was supreme love to Christ, which qualified Peter to feed his flock with fidelity. "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I

love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." Love lies at the foundation of all ministerial fidelity. Love to God, love to Christ, love to the gospel, and love to the souls of men, is the most prominent trait in the character of a faithful minister.

Secondly: A faithful minister does not shun to declare all the counsel of God, but endeavors to preach the gospel as fully and as plainly as possible. He keeps back nothing, which he thinks will be profitable to his people, through fear of displeasing the enemies of truth. He means to exhibit human depravity, divine sovereignty, special grace, and every other peculiar and essential doctrine of the gospel, in the clearest and strongest light. And it is by preaching those truths plainly which he knows to be the most important, though most disagreeable to the corrupt heart, that he gives the best evidence of his sincere love to God, and to the souls of men. Paul considered it as a peculiar mark of his own faithfulness, that he plainly and boldly inculcated the most profitable and most disagreeable doctrines of the gospel. He said to the Corinthians, "We are not as many which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." "As we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." He said to the elders of Ephesus, "Ye know, from the first day I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews. And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you; but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." And he still more solemnly declared to the Galatians, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel;

which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." If Paul could not have faithfully discharged his ministerial office, if he had not plainly preached the pure, important, and disagreeable doctrines of the gospel; we may safely conclude that this mode of preaching is essential to the character of a faithful minister. To preach the truth and the whole truth, without ambiguity or reserve, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear to hear, whether they are pleased or whether they are displeased, is a clear and convincing evidence of ministerial fidelity.

The third, and perhaps the most prominent trait in the character of a faithful minister, which ought to be particularly mentioned, is this. He will uniformly and perseveringly perform the self denying duties of his office, which are of a less public nature, but of no less importance, than his ministrations on the Sabbath. In visiting the sick and the dying, he will deal plainly as well as tenderly with them. Though they and their friends may desire him to say nothing to disturb their groundless peace and comfort, yet he will endeavor to impress on their minds all such plain and heart searching truths, as their critical and alarming situation imperiously requires. Under such circumstances, he will regard God and the good of precious souls, rather than the unjust pleasure or displeasure of his people. Whenever he is called to converse with persons about the state of their minds, whether they are in stupidity, distress, or doubt, he will not daub with untempered mortar, nor endeavor to comfort those who ought not to be comforted; but he will sincerely aim, by the manifestation of the truth, to destroy the false hope of the sinner, and establish the well founded hope of the believer. In conducting the concerns of the church, he will stand erect, and neither justify the guilty, nor condemn the innocent; but without fear or favor, firmly and impartially pursue the things which make for the peace, the purity, and the edification of the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made him the overseer. He will keep a vigilant eye upon false teachers, who may attempt to corrupt, divide, and destroy his people; and warn them to mark those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrines which they have learned, and avoid them. He will contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints. Like Paul, he will "fight the good fight of faith," and boldly stand up in the defence

of the gospel against all gainsayers, who either deny its divinity, or corrupt its doctrines. In a word, he will discharge every self denying duty of his office; take heed unto himself, and unto his doctrine; and be a bright and amiable "example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

Having very briefly delineated the most prominent traits in the character of a faithful minister, I proceed to show what solid reasons he may have to rejoice, in the nearest prospect of eternity.

Paul habitually kept eternity in view, through the whole course of his ministerial life. He maintained a realizing sense, that he watched for souls as one who must give account. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, he solemnly declares, "I die daily;" that is, I keep death continually in view. And in his second epistle, he assures them, "All things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." He said also to the Philippians, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." Paul, like Moses, had respect to the recompense of reward; and habitually fixed his eye, his heart, and his hope, upon the invisible and glorious objects of eternity. And as he advanced nearer and nearer to the eternal world, his prospects expanded, his hopes brightened, and his pure and holy joys increased. This appears from his triumphant language in the text. "I am now ready to be offered; and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day." A consciousness of having magnified his office, and of having faithfully discharged the arduous and important duties of it, gave him good grounds of joy and even triumph, in the nearest views of eternity. And as every faithful minister must be in some measure conscious of the same kind, though not of the same degree of fidelity, in preaching the gospel, and in promoting the cause of Christ; so he must have the same solid reasons to rejoice in the close of life, and in the clear view of the day of judgment. Here then I would observe,

1. That he has good reason to rejoice, that he chose the work of the ministry in preference to any other employment in life. The most useful employment must be allowed to be the most important and desirable. Let the work of the ministry be estimated according to this criterion, and it will appear to be the most eligible employment, to every wise and good man. God has, from age to age, placed some good men in stations of the highest secular importance, and enabled them to fill their elevated stations with dignity and fidelity. If we now compare the faithful life of Paul with the faithful life of Moses, or of David, or of Solomon, or of any other pious and faithful prince or potentate, will not the apostle appear the most useful man? He carried the gospel into almost all parts of the heathen world; established Christian churches in the principal cities of the countries where he preached; and was the instrument, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, of turning multitudes of immortal souls from the power of Satan unto God. These fruits of his ministerial labors are more noble, more durable, and more important, than the fruits of any other man's secular services. He had abundant reason, therefore, to rejoice in the close of life, that God disposed him to choose the arduous and important work of the gospel ministry. And all faithful ministers will have good reason to rejoice in the close of life, that God inclined their hearts to devote themselves to his sacred service in the sanctuary; and gave them the precious privilege of being workers together with him in building up his spiritual kingdom among men. Though many may have regretted that they ever undertook to preach the gospel, yet no faithful ministers ever regretted their having an opportunity of spreading the glad tidings of salvation, when they have come to the confines of the grave, and to review their lives in the light of eternity. They have found their loss of ease, or wealth, or fame, richly compensated by a consciousness of fidelity, a belief of their usefulness, and the anticipation of seeing the seals of their ministry at the last day. This was a source of joy to the apostle Paul, who put the pleasing question to his converts among the Thessalonians, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"

2. A faithful minister has good reason to rejoice in the close of life and in the view of eternity, that God has enabled him to be faithful. Every faithful minister is deeply sensible of his own weakness, and insufficiency to discharge the peculiar and arduous duties of his office, with persevering zeal and fidelity. Paul, with all his rich furniture for his work, was habitually sensible of his moral insufficiency for the due discharge of his ministerial duty. After reminding the Corinthians that he had

been instrumental of their conversion, he humbly acknowledges his own inability; and ascribes his fidelity and success to the grace and power of God. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament." Again he says, "When I am weak, then am I strong." At another time he confidently declares, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." He constantly relied on divine aid and assistance, to enable him to be faithful and successful in preaching and defending the gospel, amidst the united opposition of the visible and invisible enemies of the cause of Christ. And he implicitly acknowledges the divine assistance he had received, when he says in the text, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." It was a matter of admiration and joy, that he had been enabled to overcome the numerous and formidable dangers and obstacles that he had had to encounter, from the corruptions of his own heart, from the wiles of Satan, and from a frowning world. He rejoiced that God had made him a conqueror and more than conqueror over all his spiritual enemies. And when any faithful minister reviews, at the close of life, the trying scenes through which he has passed, he will appear as a wonder to himself; and find just cause to rejoice in God, who has made him in any measure faithful and successful in his work.

3. A faithful minister has good reason to rejoice in the close of his ministry, because God has given him assurance, that all his faithful labors shall produce some valuable and important effects, either sooner or later. The fidelity of pious and zealous ministers often appears to produce but a very little good, and a great deal of evil; which gives them occasion to complain, in the words of the prophet, that they have labored in vain and spent their strength for nought. But when they consider that their fidelity is pleasing to God, and will redound to his glory, they may justly rejoice in it. He has assured them, that their preaching shall not be lost in a single instance, but answer his own wise and holy purpose. "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Though a faithful minister may never know, in this world, what great or good effects may flow from his labors, yet he may be assured, that they will completely answer the divine purposes. And the belief of this, may afford

him a solid foundation of peace and comfort in the close of life. It has been the case in every age of the church, that one faithful minister has sowed, that another might reap. This our Saviour taught his disciples in the fourth of John. "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor; other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors." The priests, and prophets, and John the Baptist, prepared the way for the apostles; and the apostles prepared the way for their immediate successors; who prepared the way for others, from age to age, to the present time. And we, who are now occupying the vineyard of Christ, are undoubtedly sowing, that those who are coming after us may reap the fruits of our labor. The sower may have as much reason to rejoice as the reaper, if he is equally laborious and faithful. It is, therefore, a solid ground of joy and gratitude to faithful ministers, that their labors shall not be lost; but sooner or later subserve the great purposes of the gospel. So the apostles thought and said. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life." I must add,

4. That a faithful minister has good ground to rejoice when the time of his departure is at hand, because God has promised him an ample reward for all his sincere services. This was a source of peculiar joy and triumph to the great apostle, when he was finishing his course, and going off from the stage of life. Conscious of his sincerity and fidelity in all he had said and done and suffered, in the due discharge of the duties of his high and holy office; he anticipated the fulfilment of the great and precious promises of the gospel to all its faithful ministers. He recollected that Daniel had said, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." He remembered the parable of the talents, in which Christ said to him who received and improved five talents, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Hence he justly concluded that

there was a crown of righteousness laid up for him, which the Lord the righteous Judge would finally bestow upon him, as a reward for all his faithful labors. Such a crown of righteousness awaits every faithful minister; and the sure prospect of it affords a good reason to rejoice in the nearest views of eternity.

Having delineated the character of a faithful minister, and pointed out the sources of his joyful hopes and prospects in a dying hour; I have no doubt but that this whole assembly will clearly perceive the propriety of applying what has been said in this discourse, to the late pious pastor of this religious society, whose remains now lie before us.

Nature endued Mr. Dickinson with that placid countenance, that mild disposition, and those social virtues and mental excellences, which attracted the love and esteem of all his friends, connections, and acquaintance. But these are not worthy to be compared with those moral excellences which diffused a radiance around his religious and ministerial character. He was very apparently a man of God, who exhibited the reality and beauty of religion in his private conversation, as well as in his more public and official conduct. He carried religion with him wherever he went, and made it manifest to all around him, that he was habitually under the influence of the love and fear of God. He gave convincing evidence that he loved those doctrines of the gospel which he taught to others, and taught them in love to their souls. The whole tenor of his preaching plainly indicated that he sought to please God, rather than man; for he did not shun to exhibit the most essential, the most humiliating, and the most heart searching truths, in terms too plain for any to misunderstand. He had a clear, strong, and pleasant voice, which enabled him to speak with peculiar propriety and energy; and as he aimed to draw the attention of his hearers to his subject, rather than to himself, so he seldom failed of deeply impressing their hearts and consciences. He loved to converse upon religious subjects, and greatly excelled in private discourses with his people; whether they were in prosperity or adversity, whether they were in health or sickness, whether they were concerned or unconcerned about the state of their souls, and whether they were under the hidings of God's face, or enjoyed the light of his countenance. He assiduously performed the most self denying duties of his office. He took heed to his ministry, and left no proper methods unemployed, to promote the spiritual benefit of his people. He preached the word in season, and out of season; and he privately reproved, rebuked, and exhorted, with peculiar tenderness, plainness, and fidelity. He endeavored to guard his whole flock against those wolves in sheep's clothing, who lie in wait to deceive and to

destroy. He fought the good fight of faith; and zealously contended for the doctrines which he supposed to be according to godliness; and continued through life to exhibit all the common marks of a pious christian and of a faithful minister.

But this is not enough to say of Mr. Dickinson; for in some Christian and ministerial virtues he shone with a peculiar lustre. His meekness resembled the meekness of Moses. His patience resembled the patience of Job. His fortitude and zeal resembled the fortitude and zeal of Paul. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. When he was abused, he overcame evil with good. He endured unjust opposition with fortitude; and with a zeal according to knowledge, he promoted the cause of Christ at home and abroad. He was among the most zealous ministers and christians, to spread the gospel, and to extend the kingdom of Christ through the world. By his noble example in these things, Mr. Dickinson, though dead, still speaketh to his brethren in the ministry, and calls upon them to go and do likewise.

His death was correspondent to his life; for when he had finished his ministerial course, and the time of his departure drew nigh, he found good reason to hope and rejoice in the nearest views of eternity. His lingering disorder, which did not directly affect his intellectual powers, gave him ample opportunity of reflecting upon the past, and of anticipating the future. Though he was frequently afflicted with extreme bodily pain and distress, during a long season of debility and languishment; yet he manifested the same calmness and serenity, the same meekness and patience, and the same submission and fortitude, that he had uniformly exhibited in the time of health and activity. When he had nearly given up all expectation of living, he freely conversed about death and eternity, in a realizing view of those solemn scenes, with apparent peace and full assurance of hope. He seemed to have nothing to fear from the sting of death, or the terror of the grave; nor to forbid him saying with the departing apostle, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day." He certainly gave us sufficient evidence to trust that he has fallen asleep in Christ, and will be amply rewarded with a crown of righteousness, when the Lord Jesus shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

The decease of such a pious and faithful minister, in the midst of his days and of his usefulness, bears a dark aspect upon

the cause and interest of Christ. It is a day of deep declension; iniquity abounds, and the love of many is waxing cold. Religious errors and delusions are coming in like a flood upon us. We need the Noahs, and Jobs, and Daniels, and Pauls, and Timothies, to stand in the gap; and by their fervent prayers and zealous exertions, to strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die. This instance of mortality gives us just cause to cry, "Help Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

This subject and this occasion concur to admonish us who are ministers of the gospel, that the time of our departure draws near, and perhaps nearer to the speaker, than to any one of his brethren here present. As our days are continually decreasing, so our obligations to fidelity, activity, and zeal, in discharging the duties of our sacred office, are continually increasing. Let us not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Let us follow the example of those who have fought a good fight, who have kept the faith, and who have finished their course with joy. Let us live in the lively exercise of every Christian grace, and faithfully perform every ministerial duty; that we may be prepared to rejoice in the nearest views of eternity, and to bear our dying testimony to the truth and divinity of the gospel, and to the peace and consolation of those who cordially embrace it.

The amiable character, the pious life, and peaceful death of Mr. Dickinson ought to assuage the sorrow, as well as excite the submission and gratitude of all his pious and respectable relatives and connections, on this mournful occasion.

The bereaved widow has indeed just cause to mourn, but not to murmur or repine. She ought to see the heart, as well as the hand of God in her afflictions, and cheerfully submit to his disposing will. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; and precious in his sight is the death of his saints. Though she has lost her best and most valued friend, yet she has good ground to hope that he has gained a crown of righteousness, that fadeth not away; which ought to mitigate her grief, and repress every murmuring thought. It becomes her to cherish and maintain a grateful sense of the goodness of God, in continuing his life and usefulness so long, and in giving her peculiar opportunities of deriving great and lasting benefit from his example, his prayers, and his preaching. Let her remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. Let her neither despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when she is rebuked of him. And let her trust in the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength; and he will be her shield and exceeding great reward.

The children have sustained a heavy and irreparable loss, by the death of their pious and faithful father, in their young and inexperienced age. Their spiritual as well as temporal welfare lay near his heart, and he employed all proper means to train them up in the way in which they should go. His example, his prayers, his instructions, and his dying counsels, lay them under solemn and endearing obligations to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and to submit to his will under their present and all future trials. They certainly never can forget their pious education; and it is hoped that they never will eradicate the deep impressions which it has made upon their young and tender hearts. They are entreated to remember, that they have been devoted to God, according to his own institution; that they can have no excuse for neglecting the one thing needful; and that God has graciously said, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." *

God has sorely frowned upon the parents, the brothers, and the sisters of the deceased, by the death of a son and brother who had possessed a large share of their tenderest affections. It must be a consoling thought, that he was so justly beloved and esteemed by others, who sincerely sympathize with them under the bereaving stroke of Providence. But nothing short of cordial submission of their wills to the will of God, can completely heal their wounded hearts, and prepare them to follow him, whom they have good reason to believe has finished his course with joy, and reached the kingdom of glory.

The church and congregation in this place have been highly favored, by the distinguishing blessing of a pious and faithful minister. But God, for wise and holy reasons, has been pleased to take him away from them in the vigor of life; which calls for their unfeigned sorrow, unreserved submission, and serious self examination. He has been, and will be, a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death, to all who have been favored with his plain, faithful, and heart searching preaching. They are now divinely admonished to consider how they have viewed, how they have valued, and how they have heard their deceased pastor. If they will follow the pious example he has left them, and cordially embrace the pure doctrines of the gospel which he has so often and powerfully inculcated upon them, they may humbly hope to meet him at the right hand of their Judge in peace, and to be his joy and crown of rejoicing at the last day. Those who have given in

* Mr. Dickinson left five children; three sons and two daughters. The four younger ones have not arrived at the years of maturity. His eldest son has received a public education, sustains an amiable character, and promises to be eminent in whatever profession he shall eventually pursue.

their names to Christ, and sincerely engaged to promote his cause in general, and especially in this place, will carry this church and people to the throne of divine grace, and fervently plead with God to repair the breach he has made, and send them another pastor after his own heart. And they may be assured, that he has never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.

May this whole assembly realize, that they must soon follow him, whom they this day lament. You have all a crown of righteousness to gain or to lose. The day of your departure is at hand, and Death is on his way to meet you. To-day you may make your peace with God; to-morrow may be too late. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. If you are wise, you are wise for yourselves; but if you scorn and despise the offers of mercy, you alone must bear it.

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